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THE ART OF PREACHING

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THE ART OF PREACHING

BY

CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

DEAN OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL, YALE UNIVERSITY

THE FORTY-EIGHTH SERIES
OF LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES ON PREACHING
IN YALE UNIVERSITY

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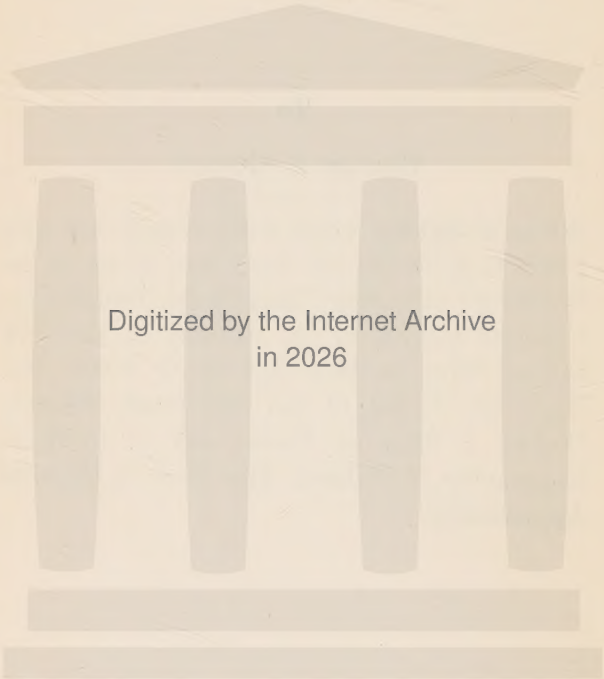
To

George A. Gordon

Whose Preaching Kindled My Own Heart with Fresh Impulse During My Three Years in the Seminary; Who Has Nobly Maintained the Intellectual Dignity of the Ministry in Times of Stress; Who for Well-nigh Forty Years Has Made the Pulpit of the Old South Church, Boston, a Place of Power and of Spiritual Impartation, I Dedicate This Book in Grateful Appreciation.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FOREWORD

When my honored colleagues in the Faculty of the Yale Divinity School first asked me to give the Lyman Beecher Lectures for the year 1922-23 I declined their generous invitation. I did this on the ground that I had already given a course of Lyman Beecher Lectures sixteen years ago on "The Social Message of the Modern Pulpit;" and for the further reason that it seemed to me inappropriate for one of our own Faculty to perform this office on the occasion of the celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the School. These objections however did not appear to them important, and when the invitation was cordially renewed two months later it seemed best for me to undertake this service.

We have had in recent years several notable Courses of Lyman Beecher Lectures discussing the relation of the pulpit to the Great War and to the vast and intricate problems which it created. Dr. John Kelman lectured on "The War and Preaching;" Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin considered the issues involved "In a Day of Social Rebuilding." Dr. William P. Merrill considered "The Freedom of the Preacher" as affected by recent developments. We have had other courses dealing particularly with the theological, the educational, the social phases of the minister's vocation in these grave times upon which we have fallen.

We have not had for thirty years a series of Lyman Beecher Lectures dealing directly with the technique of preaching. It has seemed fitting therefore that as a teacher of homiletics and as one whose main office for many years has been that of preaching, I should take up in a more intimate way the making of a sermon.

I have not attempted anything so ambitious as a thoroughgoing treatise on homiletics. This book contains a series of lectures filled mainly with practical suggestions as to "the art of preaching." I have retained the form of direct personal address as best suited to the purpose in mind. The expressions which have come from the students who heard the lectures have encouraged me to hope that these words may have value for some of my brother ministers in active service who are sharing in the heat and burden of a day made difficult to all of us as preachers by the tense and troubled conditions of our modern life.

The reluctance of multitudes of thoughtful people to "sit under our preaching" after the manner of their more patient forefathers, becomes a kind of challenge to do our bit in a more interesting and a more effective way. How difficult a task it is I have learned full well by oft-repeated, humbling experiences. Yet in the face of everything, I still believe with all my heart (as I believed thirty-three years ago when I was first ordained) that to preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest office and the most alluring interest to which any human being can be called.

Chas. R. Brown.

Yale University,
October 1, 1922.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I	The Significance of the Sermon . .	1
II	The Basis of the Sermon . . .	32
III	The Content of the Sermon . .	62
IV	The Measure of the Sermon . . .	94
V	The Lighter Elements of the Sermon	123
VI	The Delivery of the Sermon . . .	155
VII	The Setting of the Sermon . . .	188
VIII	The Soul of the Sermon . . .	222

THE ART OF PREACHING

I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SERMON

THE poor sermon is everywhere spoken against. "Dull as a sermon!" "Prosy as a preacher!" "He has the homiletic habit!" "Whatever you do, don't preach!" "His book is as lifeless as an old volume of sermons."

In these familiar phrases, caught up at random from the swiftly flowing currents of popular speech, we find the common appraisal set upon the sermon. It is a dull day when some light-hearted newspaper man does not make merry over the unpopularity and the futility of the unhappy sermon. In many a quarter the conventional sermon has fallen so low that none shall count himself so poor as to do it reverence.

Yet in the very teeth of this easy and widespread detraction of that form of address, I am here to maintain against all comers that the sermon is by right, and may well be in fact, the most august expression of mind, heart and will to be heard anywhere in human society. I would agree most heartily with the estimate placed upon it by one who was himself possessed of fine literary skill, by one whose little books are read from the rising of the sun to

the going down of the same. It was Ian Maclaren, the author of "The Bonnie Brier Bush," who said, "The most critical and influential event in the religious week is the sermon."

In the preaching of a real sermon the whole man is acting and reacting under the stimulus offered by the spiritual needs of a body of people. The preacher's face and bearing, his voice and his eye, all his mental faculties, —reason, judgment, insight, imagination and the rest,— all his spiritual faculties, sympathy, aspiration, high resolve, faith, hope, and love—all these are engaged in a concerted movement upon the minds and hearts of those listeners. And furthermore, this putting forth of energy has in view certain high spiritual ends. The preacher is intent upon manifesting to those people the truth in action, in terms of experience, so that by the power of his message they may be lifted to higher levels of being. And the very fact that a really live sermon is an exercise of this sort clothes it with an august character.

The high office of the sermon is the creation, the nurture and the direction of Christian impulse. When you undertake to preach a sermon you set yourself the task of convincing the judgment, of kindling the imagination, of moving the feelings, and of giving such a powerful impulse to the will that this finer quality of being may find expression in finer forms of action. And we know from experience that in securing this high end the divine energy operates habitually and most powerfully through those vital truths which bear upon the development of spiritual life. The sermon embodying in living form some important portion of this truth is therefore de-

signed to make men feel, and feel so deeply that they will resolve. It is designed to make men resolve and resolve so strongly that they will act. And the impulse which thus issues in action is directly begotten under the compelling influence of the truth by the immediate operation of the Spirit of Truth, who is the Holy Spirit, moving upon the moral nature of the hearer.

We sometimes hear light-hearted and light-headed people who have not learned their way about, remarking in this strain, "We do not want our preachers to give us theology—let them give us the simple gospel." But "the simple gospel," as men sometimes call it, not knowing what they say, is brimful of theology. It is a presentation of truths, deep, broad, high, stretching on endlessly in their abiding significance. The impulse which caused that young man in the far country to rise and move out along a better line of life was not born directly of his physical discomfort. He was "in want and no man gave unto him." He felt a keen sense of disgust arising from his disappointing association with the harlots and with the hogs.

But the compelling impulse which brought him to his feet and caused him to orient himself aright was born of his vision of a deeper truth. He remembered that he had a father. He knew that in that father's house, far distant though it was, there was bread enough and to spare. He knew that action on his own part would bring him again to his father's house with an open chance of adequate support in the position at least of a hired servant. And the compelling force of those considerations, all of them having to do with realities far removed

from the field of his immediate personal experience, created within him the impulse which changed his whole career and set him in that line of advance which meant forgiveness, restoration, peace, joy and honor.

The young man was saved, not by those plain ethical considerations there within arm's length as he faced the field of swine. He was saved in a word "by faith," by following out the plain implications of his theology—by his sense of a Father's undestroyed interest in him and by that whole system of values made effective by the exercise of faith.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is both a promise and a command, a privilege and a duty. It was to be through that keen, immediate sense of realities, unseen indeed but vital and eternal, that men were to be freed from all that hurts or hinders life in the high advance for which it is designed. Where the heart of some individual seems devoid of Christian impulse we look to some effective presentation of the truth in compelling form to work the needed change. The august sanctions which attach to righteousness, the deterrent considerations which can be brought to buttress the will against the onslaughts of evil, the uncovering of the profounder sources of motive and stimulus bringing up moral supplies from a deeper level of being, the clothing of the life of uprightness and of service with all its appropriate glory until it becomes a privilege, interesting, dynamic, resplendent,—all these aspects of religious truth bear directly and vitally upon the unfolding life of the spirit.

You will recall the familiar word of Augustine,

"Veritas pateat, veritas placeat, veritas moveat." "Make the truth plain! make the truth pleasing! make the truth moving."

The proper nurture of that Christian impulse thus created as it shall move from blade to ear and from the ear on toward the full corn issuing at last in a rewarding harvest, is also to be achieved mainly by the operation of the divine spirit through those forms of truth which relate themselves in vital fashion to the mental and spiritual processes having to do with the maturing of wholesome character.

And to complete the cycle, the well ordered and efficient expression of that Christian impulse, once awakened and then genuinely ripened, in terms of useful service makes a similar requisition upon the values attendant upon the presentation of the truth in its most dynamic form through preaching. The high office of the sermon then is to aid in the creation, the nurture and the direction of Christian impulse.

Your business as preachers is not to lecture on botany but to raise flowers. Your thorough knowledge of botany will help. It is impossible to raise successfully a full measure of the finest flowers without a knowledge of botany. But in his use of that knowledge the eyes of the wise gardener are constantly upon the results to be achieved in the realm of life. You in like manner will employ the entire results of your study in philosophy, in theology, in Biblical criticism and in church history to promote religious life in the people who may be brought within the range of your influence. You will be saying to your hearers, "This know and thou shalt live."

In my own ministry I have steadily emphasized the value of personal visitation. It was my custom for twenty odd years to make at least one thousand pastoral calls in every twelve months—this was the minimum with as many more added as time might allow. The process of using up the gray matter of the brain in the preparation of sermons should in my judgment be paralleled by a similar process of wearing out shoe leather and bicycle tires or a modest Ford in moving about one's parish.

It was a most essential part of this visitation that it enabled me to carry on a continual work of personal evangelism. The years which showed the best returns in the enlistment of men and women in Christian life were the years when I gave the largest amount of time to the filling of my basket with hand-picked fruit through personal visitation rather than in shaking the tree by a more general and miscellaneous effort at evangelism.

I have also in my ministry emphasized the vital importance of social effort. The value of making application of Christian principles to the industrial and political problems of men bulks large in my own trial balance. We are not sent to save individuals out of a world which is to be left to its own fateful ruin. We are sent to save individuals in this world and to coöperate with them in the saving of the world itself as an object of the divine interest and the subject of an actual redemption. Men will not be saved by sermons and sacraments on Sunday unless they are also being saved on all the other six days by the work they do, by the conditions under which they do it and by the spirit they put into it.

And I would record my own feeling in passing, that

no man needs to leave the pastorate to find the largest sort of opportunity for social effort. Standing at the head of an active, useful church he occupies a position of unique importance in rendering personal service and in furnishing leadership for those organized efforts which have to do with the better administration of what is called "charity," with the introduction of a more democratic and Christian spirit in the control of industry, with the moralization of those commercial activities which consume the bulk of human time and strength and with the ennobling of our civic life until "the powers that be" shall indeed be "ordained of God" to high ends. The wise and efficient pastor may, in no perfunctory or official fashion but in genuine everyday usefulness, sit upon one of those "twelve thrones" which are to "judge the tribes of Israel."

But with all these interests of the minister of Christ fully and clearly in view, I would say without a moment's hesitation that the making and delivery of an effective sermon is not only the most conspicuous but the most influential single service the minister is privileged to render in the whole round of the week's activity. There are any number of men and women in your parish who are both competent and willing to give attention to civic and charitable interests. They stand prepared and ready for those lines of action which have to do with social and industrial betterment. The layman in his particular field of interest is oftentimes more competent for this form of service than is the minister.

But unless you are in a large city church where there is a staff of clergymen, you are the one and only man in that church who can stand in the pulpit, dealing with

truth in the large, and with people in the large as an effective preacher of a divine gospel. Your pulpit is therefore your throne where you exercise an undisputed prerogative. You may well ascend it as a king, possessed alike with the sense of royal privilege and of an exacting responsibility.

The significance of the sermon is further heightened by the fact that in the preaching of it you are taking from the people a vast amount of valuable time. To what other man in the community are five hundred or a thousand people ready to give a half hour of their time, week after week, simply that he may talk to them? Suppose you are preaching for half an hour to only two hundred people, which is a congregation of very modest size. Here you have consumed one hundred hours of their time! You have taken a measure of time which in the mass amounts to more than twelve days of eight hours each for an individual. Have you that material in your sermon which is of such moment that it would warrant you in going to any one man or woman in that congregation and saying, "I would like to have two whole weeks of your time to impart to you certain values which I have here in this discourse." If the congregation has in it five hundred or a thousand people then the responsibility of asking for that amount of time, for that measure of human attention, for that quantity of human life, that you may deal with it as you will, that you may summon it to give heed to what you have brought, is multiplied until the very thought of making such a demand upon one's fellow beings becomes in turn alarming, humbling and inspiring.

There is unfortunately a certain sinful readiness on the

part of some ministers to presume upon human forbearance because massed together the patient people will listen to and tolerate that which any one of them taken alone would either openly resent or quickly escape from. The minister who is dealing out the same old thing, Sunday after Sunday, pious platitudes which have been heard by these very people a thousand times, with nothing fresh, nothing stimulating, nothing creative about it, would never dare to inflict such stale stuff on any one intelligent person in that group taken apart and alone. The man guilty of a flow of pious twaddle, weak, thin, greasy, would be shamed out of it if he would only picture to himself the look of consternation which would come over the face of any intelligent man in that congregation to whom he might offer such an output in personal conversation. And all those futile, pointless, attenuated exhortations, to which no response is really expected, would likewise become impossible if the individual hearer were considered in detachment from the patient mass. If the preacher would add up the full measure of time which he is taking, by computing the separate contribution made by each one in the congregation who yields his presence for the half hour, and would then separate each one of those minds from the mass, thus studiously avoiding the unworthy habit of presuming upon the principle of group-patience, he would be moved to fight shy of all that dilly-dallying. He would strive to pack his sentences with meaning. He would endeavor so to condense and to concentrate his thought as to make it worthy of presentation to the people before him.

The sermon gathers further significance from the fact

that it is, or should be, the flowering forth of the best there is in the man who preaches it. When you stand up in your pulpit you are saying in effect, "Here is my ripest judgment on this matter in hand. Here is my profoundest thought touching the interests we are considering. Here is the best I can do as a result of all my training and effort in giving that thought worthy literary expression. Here is the fullest outbreathing of my sympathy as I reach for your attention. Here is the holiest aspiration of my soul as I look Godward for His help in making my message effective. Here is the utmost vigor of my personality in action on the highest levels open to me as I seek to lodge this truth permanently in your inmost soul." If the sermon is a sermon, it is just that, and it is all that.

The sermon is the highest output of which a man trained and devoted to this end is capable at his best. How clear this was in the preaching of our Lord! How we feel the revealings of his power in that Sermon on the Mount! "Seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and opened his mouth, and taught them." When He saw the people He felt the tug and pull of their need upon his mind and heart—He opened His mouth, and out came the Sermon on the Mount in all its beauty and power!

"Seeing the multitudes"—his message was called out by the appeal of life. It was shaped up in the immediate presence of life. In every line it bore directly upon some one of the fundamental needs of life. It was the outbreathing of One who counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, standing here in the very act of re-

lating his own dearest possessions to human necessity. To feel the challenge of all that human need, and then to meet it with the very best one can bring, is to preach.

The man who can stand before a waiting congregation of expectant people and not feel in a measure almost overpowering the tug and pull of their need upon his own moral reserves, summoning him into the highest action of which he is capable, is altogether too wooden to be in the ministry for a single hour. Such a man might usefully serve his day and generation by becoming one of those patient figures representing a rapidly vanishing race standing out in front of a cigar store to invite custom. But such a wooden Indian cannot preach. If any man would preach he must have that spiritual susceptibility which at the very sight of a waiting congregation, causes him to kindle and burn like a steel wire ignited in pure oxygen.

"Here am I," the real preacher says, "not to put in thirty minutes with some sort of pious talk because it is the custom! Here am I, not to create a wonderful impression by making what the sinful and wayfaring man sometimes calls 'one of my greatest efforts.' Here am I, not merely to give an audience a pleasant half hour! Here am I, to allow the best I have in mind and soul, in brotherly sympathy and in spiritual effectiveness to find expression and lodge something of permanent worth in the lives of these people!"

You can see at once how this conception of the sermon lifts it entirely out of the category of clever and skillful performances. If the clown in the circus has made the people laugh and has enabled them to enjoy the hour, he

has discharged his duty—he is not responsible for anything more. If the clever acrobat or the trained singer or the popular lecturer has met his assignment in a manner acceptable to those who have paid their money for the performance, his obligation has been entirely fulfilled. What these men have done or said or sung, may lie quite apart from their personal interest—they may have been doing it all merely to earn their wages. They are not to be censured if this is the fact.

Not so the preacher! The preacher is never content unless the best in his own life has uttered itself in such fashion as to find and aid the best in all those other lives to whom he would minister in spiritual things.

In the preaching of a single sermon the minister may be meeting an actual moral crisis in the lives of any number of the people before him. He may be aware of some of these but the larger portion of them are hidden away in the depths of those human hearts. Here are those who have just passed under the shadow of some great sorrow which blotted out all the stars in the sky! Here is a man who is still staggering under the heavy load of some bitter disappointment! Here are those who have gradually awakened to the life-long tragedy of an ill-advised marriage! Here are those who can scarcely sit in their pews because of the rasping load of anxieties they bear! Here are fathers and mothers breaking their hearts over sons who are going wrong!

If by some sort of spiritual X-ray the preacher could pierce through the concealment of ordinary conventions and behold the moral crises, the spiritual famines and the personal tragedies to which he is called to minister, the

very sight of it all would stir up the dullest man who was ever ordained into something of the eagerness and effectiveness of real preaching. It would shame him out of the listlessness, the perfunctoriness, the dullness which cast their blight upon many a pulpit, stinging him into something that would at least bear the semblance of life.

The preacher is also preaching to people who are nearing some great crisis just around the next bend in the road. Here is a man whose wife will die before another Sunday! Here are parents who may have a child killed by an automobile before the week is gone! Here is a woman who may discover within the next six days the infidelity of her husband, blotting out all her joy and all her confidence in human affection!

Here are those who are rapidly approaching some frightful, overwhelming calamity! Those of us who were preaching in the cities bordering on San Francisco Bay on Easter Sunday, in the year of our Lord, 1906, delivered our messages to crowded churches. On the following Wednesday at a quarter past five o'clock in the morning came the earthquake.

It left a mighty, joyous city in ruins and ashes. The fire occasioned by the earthquake and made irresistible by the breaking of the water mains, turned three hundred thousand people into the streets, homeless, foodless, with no clothing save what they wore on their backs. There were thousands of people who retired the night before prosperous, only to be rudely awakened from their sleep to find themselves all but penniless. I suppose every minister in that part of California asked himself with searchings of heart during those solemn days which fol-

lowed, "What kind of a sermon did I give my people the Sunday before to fit them for the facing of that ordeal."

Watch therefore this high task of ministering in God's name to men's souls, for you know not what a day nor an hour may bring! If the good man in the pulpit had known what awful experiences were to break through and steal the courage, the hope and the trust of his people, he would have watched. He would have striven with all his might to buttress them more strongly against the attacks which were even then at the door.

I was preaching one Sunday night on "Mercy," human and divine. At the close of the service a young man who was the cashier of one of the manufacturing concerns in the city came to me and in the secrecy and confidence of my study he confessed to me that he had stolen twenty-eight hundred dollars from the corporation where he was employed and that the day of reckoning when the shortage would be discovered and his dishonesty exposed, was near at hand. He had been meditating either flight or suicide rather than face the disgrace and punishment which seemed inevitable. I discussed the situation with him until midnight. Then growing out of that long and serious conference we devised and carried out a plan which led to the confession of his wrongdoing to his superiors, to his retention in their employ, to the restitution of the stolen money through several years of self-sacrifice, and at last to the entire recovery of his own honest manhood.

Suppose that I had been trifling with some fringe of the truth that night! Suppose that owing to a lack of

preparation or to a lack of genuine feeling I had been unable to make the quality of mercy, human and divine, shine as a thing resplendent in the dark sky which overarched that troubled, guilty soul! I should have been smitten to the heart with shame. I should have merited, and in some form I should have received, condign punishment for neglect of duty. It was my business to be there with a message of help. I did not know that the dishonest man was there while I was preaching but he is likely to be there in any city congregation the preacher faces! You can always count upon the presence of a thief or two in almost any evening congregation. You can always count upon the presence of some soul in a crisis, crying out hungrily for the best you can give. The man who dawdles in the face of the possible need in any congregation should be unfrocked for malfeasance in office.

You may be thoroughly sure that in any congregation you face there are men and women fighting more devils than were ever cast out of Mary Magdalene. They need the best you have for them as a make-weight on the side of moral victory. You may be sure that in any congregation there are men and women sitting quietly in their pews who can scarcely keep the tears back as they reflect upon the bitter experiences through which they have been passing. They need to have some man preach to them until the heavens open and the angels of comfort are seen ascending and descending for the help of the sons of men. You may be sure that in any congregation there are moral natures getting ready to flinch in the presence of some hard duty. They need beyond all else the gripping power of some mighty truth which will nerve them for the struggle

and enable them not to turn their backs but march breast forward. The very thought of the spiritual possibilities dormant in any congregation of human beings is enough to shame any minister out of preaching a dull, cold, lifeless sermon, if by any measure of preparation and prayer he can do otherwise.

Let the minister visualize his congregation in advance if he would feel the full significance of a sermon! Let him do this while he is at work in the quiet security of his study preparing the sermon. Let him use his spiritual imagination as he thinks and writes! Without becoming for one moment wild or fanciful, he may know of a truth that any ten or twenty of a hundred different forms of moral crisis and spiritual tragedy will be there looking up in mute appeal when he stands behind his pulpit. He will learn enough in his pastoral visitation and in the office practice which comes to him as burdened hearts seek him out in their quest for relief, to be able to supply the missing segments and to make out a full-orbed circle of human necessity which will pull upon his sympathies like the tug of a planet.

The significance of the sermon is further increased by the fact that able, effective preaching sheds its strength into everything else the minister is called to do. You can enter habitually into exalted and helpful fellowship with your people by your preaching. Then as you are called to render for them other forms of service the memory of those high hours, the sense of them, the power of them will be constantly present in your heart and in theirs.

When you set forth in pastoral visitation, the people are saying not in so many words but in terms of personal

consciousness, "This man who is entering our home, sitting at our table, engaging in pleasant converse with our children, is the same man who has been causing us to see visions and dream dreams by his preaching." You are not in their eyes just so many feet and inches or so many pounds avoirdupois of flesh and blood—you are a divinely accredited messenger who for months together has been declaring to them a wonderful gospel. The full strength and the entire inspiration of all your past preaching is there as military men say "in force" multiplying by ten the good effects of your personal, intimate touch upon those lives.

You go to sit at the bed side of one who is ill—sick unto death as the event proves. The very fact that in the days of his strength you preached to him in the full energy and joy of the spiritual impartation of your best makes it unnecessary and inappropriate for you to utter any of the usual commonplaces. If you just sit there, silent, sympathetic, prayerful, looking into that wasting face with the interest you truly feel, you will bring out of a world unseen bread enough and to spare. His soul will be fed. His whole inner being will be renewed by just seeing you there.

I should say that most of the best "sick calls" I ever made as a pastor were those where I said nothing at all beyond the quiet utterance of a few texts of scripture (not read from a book but spoken out of a full heart) with perhaps three or four sentences of prayer breathed out softly—breathed out as I sat in my chair, it might be, for the Almighty is no respecter of postures. It was enough. It was vastly better than many of the wearisome, alarming,

exhausting visits, not to say "visitations," of clumsy ministrants who know not what manner of men they are.

You drop into some man's place of business for just a passing word of greeting—it is touch and go, but you bear with you the atmosphere of all those noble and hallowed ideals of integrity, of commercial honor, of highminded consideration for the human values at stake in the marts of manufacture and trade which he has heard you proclaim. And because you bear with you the sense of all this your touch is a touch of healing.

You appear in the City Hall at a public hearing on some question of vital civic interest—and to all those who are present, publicans and sinners though many of them may be, the place you have won for yourself by ministering steadily and effectively to the higher life of that community by your able sermons, a hundred of them a year for years together, speaks for you in that hour far beyond any words you may utter.

The spiritual aroma which clings to the life of a man who has for years been working in some community as a strong, vital, helpful preacher of the eternal Evangel is an all-pervasive thing. We may say of it (not irreverently I trust), that if he ascends up among the saints it is there; and if he goes down to make his fight among the sinners it is there. If he takes the wings of a motor car and goes to the uttermost parts of his parish and beyond, even there the right hand of an influence thus gained will lead and empower him. If he says, "Surely the darkness of some untoward situation will hide my power," even there, the honest work he has done for years in his pulpit will cause that place to be light about him. Such influence

is too wonderful for the unrenewed man. He cannot attain unto it. And for us all it is high. But by the empowering of the divine Spirit in this noblest of all human tasks, we can attain unto it.

Then the very habit of preaching sermons surcharged with spiritual tonic and fronting ever on the great themes and interests will incidentally save you from a world of petty annoyances which have infested all the parishes of which we have any record since the day when Euodias and Syntyche somehow failed to be of the same mind in the Lord. The petty retailer of small wares from his pulpit is constantly imperiled by every fluctuation of feeling in his parish. The timid fisher for higher values, who hugs the shore with his little boat and assays only the shallows in taking the small minnows which compass the range of his interest, may be capsized or stranded on a reef by the slightest adverse breeze. But the man who boldly launches out into the deep, intent on doing business in the great waters of spiritual effort, will be rewarded for his valor and his venture in that multiplied power which he will gain over the hearts of all those he would win to the service of the highest ideals.

The fate of our Protestant Christianity is in my judgment bound up in large measure with the rise and fall of effective preaching. If you will read your church history, reading between the lines as well as along them, you will find it so. There have been countries where the ministers of worship have been privileged to use the best to be found on the surface of the earth in the stately architecture of their church edifices; they have been able to develop and maintain the most ornate and impressive

forms of liturgy ever devised by the minds of men; they have been privileged to use the highest expressions of art, having for their altar pieces those paintings which are masterpieces and for the adornment of the niches in their temples, marble statues so nobly wrought by the sculptor's hand that they all but spoke; they have been able to levy tribute upon the best there is in music rendered by wonderful organs and heavenly choirs for the inspiration of listening congregations. And yet, if there was lacking in all this the *living* voice of a *living* man speaking in the name and under the power of the *living* God, there came a steady irresistible decline in the religious life of that land. "Religion renews its life" as one of our leading Professors of Philosophy said recently "in great bursts of impulse which emanate from rarely impressive personalities capable of inspiring exalted and passionate devotion in their friends and followers."

And contrarywise, there have been countries where all the appointments of public worship and the whole quality of the spiritual cultus were as cold and as bare as the typical New England Meeting House, set on a bleak hill, painted white, with green shutters and window panes of clear glass cut eight by ten. Yet in the very face of such æsthetic disadvantage, the religious life of that land rose into power and splendor and steadfast devotion through the vitalizing influence of great preaching.

"Now when the day of Pentecost was fully come" the early Christians were all with one accord in one place. "And suddenly," not in response to the appeal of stately architecture or of moving symbols graven and painted by man's device, not in answer to the tasteful movements of

an ornate liturgy or the beseeching energy of melodies which were like the music of the spheres, but in response to "continued prayer and supplication," there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind. And there appeared tongues—*"glossai"* in the Greek Testament, *"linguae"* in the Vulgate, *"tongues"* in Anglo-Saxon —the organ of instruction, persuasion, moral appeal, tongues like as of fire; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Then Peter stood up in that atmosphere charged with spiritual dynamic. He stood up not to conduct some highly embellished ritualistic service but to preach. And he preached—he preached them a sermon which gave utterance to the best that was in him at his best and three thousand of those who were in process of being saved were that day added to the Christian Church.

You may study the effect of this highest form of effort not merely in some local church but in a city, or in a nation, or in the whole wide world if you will, and you will find corroboration abundant for my contention as to the unique significance of the sermon. Where preaching is cultivated and developed, exalted and honored, to the highest extent possible to human intelligence and devotion thus reënforced from above, the religious life of that city or of that nation waxes strong. And conversely, where the communication of truth from God to men through the best type of personality to be secured, is neglected, the religious life is enfeebled. It is not too much to say then, that until the psychological and moral facts of this human nature of ours are changed most radically, the fate of our Protestant Christianity is bound up with the main-

tenance of strong, sensible, sympathetic and scriptural preaching.

The real significance of the sermon may be sadly distorted where it comes to be viewed as an end in itself. There are ministers who seem to have forgotten that first question in the Westminster Catechism. When they are asked, "What is the chief end of man?" they reply, "For ministers, the chief end of man is to produce two great sermons for next Sunday and two more still greater ones for the Sunday following." Those two sermons become to this unhappy minister a veritable bugbear.

The two sermons for next Sunday may become as some one has wittily expressed it, "a pair of white elephants on the minister's hands." He has to carry water for them through the whole week, as boys do when the circus comes to town. He has to be forever rubbing them down so that they may make a better appearance. He must be forever foraging to get enough of material for those two big animals to eat, for their hunger knows no rest and the capacity of their huge stomachs is apparently limitless. He is compelled to scurry around and secure new blankets to put on them for the Sunday parade. It is a frightful responsibility to dance attendance on two such voracious and exacting beasts. The poor preacher oftentimes becomes desperate and all but decides to go out of the show business altogether.

All this comes from making the sermon an end in itself in place of making it a means to an end. We are not set to produce great sermons, or to become "great preachers," as the saying of some is,—we are commissioned to produce by our work as preachers some great Christians.

The leaves of the sermon are for the healing of the people. The eyes of your head may be upon your pulpit and upon your paper, if you are a manuscript preacher, but the eyes of your mind and the attention of your heart must be upon those plain and needy people there in the pews. Not here behind the sacred desk nor upon it where your homiletic work of art lies in all its learned beauty, but out there among the lives of men, tempted, struggling, doubting, sorrowing, failing, is the place of your supreme concern.

We can imagine the Lord before whom we stand asking each one of us in searching fashion, "Have you been preaching good sermons?" In case we really know what we are about the appropriate reply will not be "Look at my barrel." The appropriate reply will be "Look at my people." Look at the size of them measured in terms of spiritual dimension! Look at the quality of them! Look at the splendid usefulness they show in those lives of service to which they have here been inspired!

When the day of judgment comes, the Son of Man sitting upon the throne of His glory and separating ministers on his right hand or on the left as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, will not look at our barrels. Our barrels will not be there. The contents of those barrels will all have been rolled up like a scroll and consumed with fervent heat. But the people to whom we have preached will be there. Some of them on the right hand, and, alas for us! some of them on the left! And that will be the terrible and searching test applied to our work as preachers. The type of character we have produced, or have failed to produce, as we have done our work with fidelity and effi-

ciency or as we have scamped it with slovenly or chilly indifference—that will be the test applied to determine whether we ourselves shall be found upon His right hand or upon the left. The final significance of every sermon is to be manifested at last not in the profundity of its thought or in the grace of its literary finish but in the spiritual results which it achieves.

It is of primary importance then that we have this fact in mind in the fixing and the concentration of our attention as preachers. The man who is out hunting does not look steadfastly at the trigger he is to pull. He is naturally desirous of carrying with him the best sort of gun he can command, but once in the field his eyes are not upon the weapon he carries but upon the game. His eyes are sweeping the sky and the field. He looks at the wild duck he is to bring down by his well directed shot. He looks at the big menacing head of that bull moose as it emerges from the brush.

In this great work of preaching then, eyes front! Interest front! The sermon is to be sent forth to convince the judgment, to fire the heart with new impulses, to arouse and direct the action of the will. The sermon, however profound its thought may be or however beautiful it may be in literary style, is a failure unless it accomplishes some definite result along that line.

There was once a discouraged young preacher who seemed to have failed utterly in awakening any spiritual interest in the congregation to which he ministered. In his desperation he secured the services of an older and more effective minister for a single Sunday. The two men sat together in the pulpit. When the lessons had been

read, the prayers offered, and the hymns sung, the older man was ready to preach. The discouraged pastor of the church, who knew his John Ruskin, then whispered to him as a grim sort of joke, "Now you have thirty minutes in which to raise the dead."

He might well have uttered his challenge seriously. We are sent to do just that. It may not be, in all probability it will not be, an instantaneous process. We are not commissioned nor empowered to call the dead forth instantly and simultaneously as with a blast from Gabriel's trumpet. But in a progressive way, by a ceaseless process of spiritual recovery we are to proclaim our good news in such fashion that we shall actually see dead men coming to life. They may come to life gradually, in spots, as it were, small areas at first and then larger areas of their natures showing the quickening touch of the Spirit. Their unfolding and ascending wants, desires, outreaches, will proclaim the fact that whereas they were lost, now they are finding themselves; whereas they were dead, they are now becoming alive again.

Art thou the type of preacher that should come or do we look for another? Show the one who makes that inquiry, those things which men do hear and see. The blind receive sight, the deaf hear, the sinners are cleansed, the poor have good tidings preached to them and the dead are raised. The sermon leaps from the preacher's lips that the people may have life and have it in abundance. He is intent upon seeing them alive, alive at more points, alive on higher levels, alive in more honorable and effective ways. The sermon is to aid them in having life which is life indeed.

The sermon gains further significance from the fact that it undertakes to restate the truths of scripture in terms of modern life; to separate that which is local and temporary from that which is universal and abiding, thus rightly dividing the word of truth; to relate to modern need in effective fashion those vital elements of truth which God has made known to us by the mouths of the holy prophets and apostles; and to interpret that whole literature so that people shall see the love of God and the clear prospect of life eternal for his children shining through it like the sun in its strength. And if the preacher can accomplish that high task, his sermons will be steadily making this Bible loved, operative and efficient in the lives of the people.

The sermon undertakes to interpret all the relations of daily life on their higher, their heavenly side, so that they may manifest his glory and the people be led to believe on Him. It undertakes to bring out the unsuspected possibilities of spiritual culture and expression in all these legitimate callings of men which eat up the bulk of their time and strength. It undertakes to set the whole life in such relation to an enfolding spiritual order, that whether men buy or sell, heal or plead, build or teach, or whatever they do, they may always and everywhere be engaged in their Father's business, carrying on an august and growing traffic in those values which transcend all human appraisal.

The sermon is to be "the communication of truth through personality," as Phillips Brooks put it. And by virtue of this function thus accurately defined it has possibilities of exalted usefulness not shared by any other

form of human expression. The printed page of the author may easily become cold, remote, abstract. The painted canvas of the artist may have no more heart in it, beautiful though it be, than a wall. The sound of the many instruments in a splendid orchestra used by some great composer to convey his message, still lacks that which may be gloriously present in the real sermon.

Here in the preaching of a sermon, the face, the bearing, and the voice, the mind, the heart and the soul of a living man, living at his best in the act of preaching to living men there present the gospel of the living God who lives and speaks through his servant in that high exercise of his best powers—all this has possibilities of self-expression and of self-impartation unequaled elsewhere.

But it goes even beyond that. The preacher's function is a transmissive function like that of Jesus. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." The minister stands midway between all the truths which may properly be utilized in preaching and the hungry hearts of a multitude. He stands midway between that Inexhaustible Storehouse of spiritual dynamic and the depleted lives of the people. He becomes in no flippant sense but in sober truth "a live wire" charged from on high to transmit light and power and warmth to those who walk in darkness, in weakness, and in the chill of spiritual neglect.

Here is a man preaching a sermon—if he is really preaching you hear him, you see him, you feel him! All the strength, the warmth and the richness of his personality as well as his uttered words are steadily counting toward the securing of a certain result. The subtle spiritual contagion of his own soul on fire with its sense of

fellowship with the divine Spirit is at work. The eager outreach of his sympathies as he loves men and lifts on them, becomes a factor in the determination of the result. If he is merely reading a dainty little essay or giving vent to a lot of noisy, thoughtless exhortation, or merely imparting a bit of ethical frappé it is not so. But if he is actually preaching the gospel of the Living God there is nothing on earth like it. If you will make the communication of truth and power through personality your supreme aim, your job is safe—there is no one else working at it; there is no one who can work at it, as you are privileged to do.

The preparation of a sermon then is really the preparation of a man who prepares and preaches sermons as the highest exercise of his functions. You will prepare a great many sermons—it will be one of the main tasks to which you will address yourself—but you will be all the while doing that more fundamental and vital thing, preparing a man who can take those sermons and preach them so that they will communicate spiritual life.

In view of the great significance of preaching, in the face of the high and lasting value which may attach to any single sermon, we cannot afford to lower our standards or to cheapen our line of goods by jesting about them. We cannot afford to allow others to jest about them. Let the minister of Christ resent all flippant references to the barrel of sermons as a collection of "dried tongue." All those venerable and feeble jokes have long since deserved respectful interment with their superannuated contemporaries.

When the minister himself falls to the level of such poor

wit every honest heart feels the sting of pain. I do not wish to hear the surgeon jesting about "keeping his knives sharp for operations" because operations bring him his largest fees. I do not want to hear from him any flippant remark about "gradually filling up his section in the cemetery" as a result of his practice of medicine—not if he is about to operate on my wife or if he is engaged to care for my child through some critical illness. The newspapers may, if they choose, indulge in such cheap and easy forms of humor at the expense of preachers and of doctors, but the men themselves knowing the dignity of their high callings and the issues which turn upon knowledge, skill and honest attention to detail, will scorn all such flippancy.

I shall never forget the sense of awe and of reverence with which I prepared and preached my first sermon. I can feel the tingle of it yet. I chose for my text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." My knowledge of Biblical criticism and of scriptural exegesis was meager to the last degree but I felt that I did know in my heart something about the meaning of that one text. I wrote, as I was to speak, mainly out of my own religious experience.

The sermon was delivered in a rather shabby little Mission in the North End of Boston. It was a section of the city where Satan had his seat at that time. The Mission was surrounded by rum shops and dance halls, by sailors' dives and gambling dens, by all the principalities and powers of evil, by the rulers of darkness and the demons of wickedness. The people in the congregation showed in their very faces that they knew more about sin

and its retribution than all my Seminary professors put together.

I stood up and preached to them that poor first sermon of mine. It would not have made much of a showing in a class on homiletics but it was the outbreathing of my very soul as I longed to help those people by some spoken word. And when at the end of the sermon the invitation was given to those who wanted to begin the Christian life to come forward and kneel at the altar as the custom was in that place, there was a response. And as I knelt with those who came and talked with them and prayed with them, conscious as they were of their moral failure and feeling after help if haply they might find it, my heart overflowed with a deep sense of holy privilege. And when it was all over, I cried all the way home for very joy that God had called me to be a minister of Jesus Christ.

I never want to lose out of my consciousness that fresh, vital sense of the high significance of it all. It was thirty-three years ago in September since I was ordained to the Christian ministry and I have been preaching steadily during all that time. I have preached thousands of sermons since that first one and I hope that I have learned something about the general method of preaching which enables me to do better work. But if I should ever get so used to it all that I could mount into a pulpit and preach a sermon without trembling, without feeling again something of that same sense of awe and of holy privilege which attended my first sermon, I should know of a surety that the time had come for me to quit. We cannot tolerate in this work of ours the least bit of affected seriousness! All pretense or bombast or make-believe intensity is the

profanation of a holy place and of a holy calling. But in honest, manly fashion we do want to exalt our preaching steadily by our own sense of the deep and precious significance which attaches to it.

We prepare ourselves assiduously for the great occasions. Nothing can be too good for the National Council, or for the General Assembly, or for the General Conference, if by reason of strength any one of us should be designated to preach the sermon in the presence of such an august company. But every occasion is a great occasion. You are constantly dealing with great themes: great interests are always at stake: great issues may turn upon the quality of any one of your messages. You can say on any day of the year and on every day of the year "This is the day which the Lord hath made—let us rejoice and be glad in it."

The hidden possibilities in any congregation to which you may be privileged to preach become therefore a challenge to your best powers. You are there to lodge if you can in every one of those lives something that will make for Christian character. You are there to lift each one of those lives into a sense of fellowship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are there to write not upon tables of stone or upon pages of paper; you are there to write upon the enduring tablets of those human hearts something that will be read to their honor and to yours in the day of Judgment. If by the exercise of spiritual imagination you can see the latent possibilities hidden there you will know of a truth that "the most critical and influential event in the religious week is the sermon."

II

THE BASIS OF THE SERMON

THE sermon should undoubtedly be a work of art. It should be a work of art in these three regards.

1. It is to be finely conceived so that it may contain and express some one great idea, standing out clear and distinct from the various surrounding truths.

2. It is to be well wrought out, the vision of the preacher passing over into achievement as he declares in the finest literary form he can command what he has seen and felt in connection with that one great truth.

3. It is to be a work rounded out, finished, and complete, so that it finally stops of itself because it is done—this last characteristic especially is held in high regard by the laymen.

And yet having said that, I feel almost ready to take it all back. The well-prepared and well-delivered sermon is indeed a work of art, yet it remains throughout a mere tool. It is only an instrument to be held in the hand or in the mind of the preacher as he goes about his work. It must never be made an end in itself. The sermon at its best is only a brush. It is a brush rather than a painting—the Christians you make by your preaching are your paintings; they are your masterpieces. You are there by your preaching to paint the image of God upon the souls

of those people. The fine sermons you preach are merely the brushes you use to achieve that superb result.

The artist's picture may or may not tell a story; it may or may not enforce a lesson—if it is in itself supremely beautiful we are ready to hang it upon the walls of the gallery. It has won its right to be there by its inherent beauty. But your aim is quite otherwise and altogether higher. You do not want your people to sit there in their pews admiring your sermons. *"Me genoito,"* as Paul would say—"God forbid!" You want your people to listen and to make response and then go forth to live Christian lives and to render Christian service. When Aeschines spoke the people went away saying, "What a magnificent oration that was!" When Demosthenes spoke they said, "Let us march against Philip." That is the real test of effective speech to-day as it was in the days of ancient Greece. You are there to set your people to marching against Macedon.

If then you are honest and reliable men, worthy to stand in Christian pulpits, you will never allow yourselves to fall down and worship your own sermons. This would be the worst sort of idolatry. Thou shalt not make unto thee any written image or any likeness of anything that is in Henry Ward Beecher or in Phillips Brooks or in Frederick W. Robertson—thou shalt not bow down thyself to such aspirations nor serve them for a single hour.

You will not allow yourself to make your sermon so fine that you would feel reluctant to introduce into it that homely, helpful and effective thing that ought to be said. This would be, as one great preacher puts it, "like a man making his chair so fine that he would not dare to sit

down in it." Chairs are to sit in rather than to be admired. Sermons likewise are to be constructed so that they will help people to live.

Where some young minister starts in on his sermon after the style of Pericles, it may seem altogether too much of a "come-down" to utter those direct and homely words of sympathy which might make it a bit easier for some man sitting in the congregation to bear the sorrow and disappointment that has fallen into his life. It might seem an unfortunate break in his flow of eloquence if he were to speak that clear-cut word of moral appeal calculated to enlist the interest and win the attachment to Christian ideals of some growing boy. In every such case it is best to let Pericles go and move straight for the boy. The sermon was made for the boy and not the boy for the sermon.

"Pulpit orators," as they are sometimes called by the ungodly, are scarce at best. I suppose there are not more than a hundred and fifty real "pulpit orators" in this room at this moment. But of men who can speak in simple straightforward fashion to the needs of their fellows there are many. Keep in mind then that the sermon is not a work of art in the sense of being an end in itself—it is the tool of our trade.

With these wholesome precautions in mind, however, I would urge every young preacher to make the very best sermons of which he is capable and every year still better ones and ever and ever better ones. And in this lecture I wish to speak more particularly of the real basis of the sermon.

The habit of taking texts is more than a mere convention. In my judgment the best sermons grow directly out

of texts. The best sermon themes are suggested mainly by the habitual, thoughtful, devotional reading of the Scriptures. The varied literature of the Bible covers a wide range of human need and privilege. The Bible is like a broad, thick slice of human experience which has found expression here in superb literary form. All the sins men commit are there; all the virtues, all the vital interests, all the high opportunities for fellowship with the Eternal are there wrought out in terms of life and in words that glow with meaning. They are all there in principle if not in detail because the spirit of all the duties in the calendar is there, even though the letter of exact direction may in some cases be lacking.

The Bible also covers the whole range of divine help. You may say of it, that its going forth is from one end of the heaven and its circuit unto the other end of it and there is nothing in the shape of human need hid from the help thereof. There is somewhere within this book an open promise of spiritual supply for every conceivable form of need. The Bible impinges upon these lives of ours at every possible point of contact. There is comfort and cheer for times of sorrow and depression; there is warning and rebuke for those who are off the path; there is confirmation and guidance for those who are faced aright. The moral interest and compassion of the Eternal Father expressed here fits in close around the needs of the child like some well made garment.

The sermon, therefore, may well grow directly out of the Scriptures. The habit of taking texts and of utilizing the many collateral passages of Scripture bearing upon the same truth, ties up our utterance to a book in common use

which has become the great classic of religious expression. The scriptural basis of the sermon thus gives it the added validity and power which comes from that precious association. "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God." You cannot be better employed in your pulpit than in steadily hiding these words of the Lord with their deeper meaning revealed, with their fuller implications finely wrought out, deep down in the hearts of the people, that they too may not sin against God.

This literature is so rich in homiletic material that the Biblical preacher need never run dry. He always has something to preach about next Sunday. He has something worthy and vital to preach about. The sensational preachers are forever running dry. The frantic efforts and the loud screeches which sometimes emanate from the pulpits of such men are like the unhappy sounds which come from some old fashioned pump in the country where the water in the well is so low that the pump will not draw. It has to be "primed" by the pouring in of a sufficient supply of water from outside the well to start it. These preachers who draw their homiletic supplies from the puddles of current events rather than from the well that is deep often find themselves similarly embarrassed.

There are not sensations enough in any one year to go around. It would be a remarkable year which furnished one hundred and four startling sensations to be used by the preacher with an itching ear for striking themes. The men, therefore, whose eyes are ever upon those newspapers which show the largest headlines and the most red ink for the securing of their themes are doomed to disappointment. But in the Scriptures we shall find flour enough

and to spare, ground out of the finest of the wheat and worthy to furnish in adequate measure that bread which comes down from above to give life unto the world.

The better way to secure this Biblical basis for one's sermons is not to go to the Bible habitually on the hunt for texts. This attitude would breed an exclusively homiletic habit of mind in reading the Bible! Ministers more than most men need to read their Bibles, not as preachers keen on the scent of likely texts, but as human beings in search of food for their own souls.

Let the texts hunt you! They will find you out if you are really worth finding. You may properly go where they are. You may give them a reasonable chance to find you. Then as you move along through Scripture intent upon knowing and feeling as much of its contents for the enrichment of your own inner life as it is possible for a man of your size to know and feel, the texts which match your mood, the texts which fit into your personal capabilities as a preacher and the texts which will best meet the needs of the people whom you are bearing sympathetically upon your heart, will fly like doves to your windows.

Get your texts as rightminded young women get their lovers. The right sort of maiden does not go forth in pursuit of them—she goes straight along about her business and lets the lovers come if they want to. And if the girl in question is any kind of a girl the lovers will come. She will by that method—a method as old as the days when Ruth gleaned after the reapers in the fields of Boaz with one eye on the stray bunches of wheat and the other, quite casually of course, on the kind-hearted well-to-do gentleman who owned the field—she will by that time-honored

method have more lovers in her wake than she would if she made a business of going after them. It might be said in passing that the young ladies are usually merciful enough to move along the main traveled roads where the young men are and so the men do succeed in finding them. And if you in similar fashion will travel thoughtfully, meditatively, expectantly, along the main traveled roads and through the by-paths of your Bibles, the right texts will find you. And the texts which come after that manner are the ones which will be found fresh, vital, and interesting, beyond all others.

I was passing somewhat cursorily one evening through those chapters of Genesis which come along between the splendid passages about the creation and the Garden of Eden, and the later story of the deluge. Those chapters are not especially rewarding. They are made up chiefly of the unfamiliar names of those old chaps who are said to have lived so long. But my eye suddenly fell upon this text—"And Methuselah begat sons and daughters and he lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years and he died." That is all that is said about him—that is all there was to say, apparently. Instantly there came the thought of that meager life. He lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years and he died. His life was a life of one dimension, namely length. No breadth of interest or wide range of sympathy to be recorded! No depth of conviction! No height of aspiration to place another worthy ideal in the sky of human desire! Nothing but length. He lived a long, narrow, uneventful, uninteresting life of one dimension. The modern scholars tell us that the names of these worthies who are said to have lived so long

are the names of tribes rather than of individuals. However that may be, Methuselah will serve as well for the purpose of illustration.

Contrast that life with the life of Jesus of Nazareth. How long did he live? Not long, speaking after the manner of men! He was only thirty-three years old when they put him to death upon the cross. Methuselah lived thirty times as long as that. And Jesus spent thirty of those thirty-three years in preparation. Ten years of training and spiritual discipline for one year of service! Ten days of thought and prayer for one day of redemptive action! Ten hours of silence before God for one hour of speech in the ears of men! How much he packed into those three short years, of ministry to human need, of contribution to human well being, of holy and permanent influence upon the unfolding life of the race! His life was not a life of one dimension—it had breadth and height and depth. And that life has become the light of men.

I had never heard nor read a sermon on Methuselah, but the moment I saw that text I was impatient for the hour to come when I could work out that idea of a life of one dimension as contrasted with the life which stands foursquare, possessing the symmetry which belongs to the soul where length and breadth and height and depth are all combined in that building of God, that house not made with hands, that spiritual edifice eternal in the heavens which represents each man's moral achievement. The moment my eye fell upon Methuselah and then ran ahead to the brief but potent life of the Master here on earth, I had my sermon.

If any man will read his Bible regularly in a brood-

ing, leisurely, reflective sort of way, pondering the depths which lie concealed, noting the points of contact between Scripture and his own heart, marking the lines of approach which the Scriptures make to the needs of his people, he will find that rewarding texts, stimulating ideals, great vital truths will rise up to meet him as the angels of God met Jacob at Mahanaim. They will come forth to wrestle with him, all night if need be, until they have blessed him. They will tell him their names and make a new man of him.

The land of Scripture is a good land. It is a land of hills and valleys that drinketh water of the rain of heaven. And it is a land of endless variety. It is a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where thou mayest eat bread without scarceness and not lack any good thing. You enter a region of plenty and of variety when you pass within the confines of holy writ. Reading the Bible broadly, passing through the length and the breadth of its wide areas, year by year with some sort of system, you will get the strength of its products, the sweep and range of its outlooks, and the genuine power of its insights into your very blood.

The man who bases his preaching in this broad way upon the teaching of Scripture is also saved from overspecialization. These single-barreled preachers who are always urging some one aspect of the manysided truth of God become in time like Jewsharps, to change the figure abruptly. Their harping is all done on one solitary reed with only slight variations of pitch according to the way they pucker their mouths. While on the other hand, the

man who allows the larger aspects of truth contained in the Scriptures to play freely into his preaching is in line to become a regular church organ with pipes innumerable. He becomes capable of uttering the deep rich diapason tones. He can upon occasion use the harsh strident summons of the trombone in denouncing some crying evil or in uttering a call to battle. He has at his command the softer string and reed stops, the flute and the viola, the clarionet and the oboe. He may indeed by his skillful use of the vox humana weep with those that weep—this however sparingly and with great good judgment especially if by temperament he leans to the tearful class of ministers. But the broader study of Scripture gives him these many lines of approach and protects him from the narrow futility of the man who makes a hobby of one idea and rides it in season and out of season to the weariness of all hands.

I am a firm believer in the value of expository preaching. There is a good deal of counterfeit money in circulation at this point. There is that which is called "expository preaching" but in reality it is another sort of thing altogether; and the discredit which attaches to the spurious article has shaken the faith of many preachers in the utility of expository sermons. It has also repelled the interest of the people in advance of any fair trial of its merits.

By expository preaching, I do not mean a running, skittering comment, suited to a Sunday School class. The man who lumps out on his congregation a lot of undigested information as to the history and geography suggested in a certain chapter, with some careless interpretation of

it, and with "the drawing of lessons," apt and inapt, is not in any sense an expository preacher. He has no unity in his message, no sense of progress, no real organization of his material, no definite aiming at a particular goal, to confer upon his effort the honor of being a sermon. He does not bring up anywhere—there is no reason why he should not go on in that hit or miss fashion verse after verse for two hours, or even for the twenty-four hours—and the patient people are sometimes afraid that he will. A congregation of sensible people will not stand for that, and they ought not to stand for it.

By expository preaching I do not mean a prayer meeting style of comment, full of pious homily, and with a certain amount of exegesis of a loose type. The expository sermon is a product of exegesis, but not an exhibition of it. It is altogether wise to dig beforehand with your Greek spade and your Hebrew shovel but not to be digging while you are preaching. The slovenly comments on some passage which become "a kind of weak and watery paraphrase of the original" is not expository preaching—it is just an exhibition of plain unregenerate laziness, on the part of a man who had not energy enough to prepare a real sermon.

The expository preacher organizes the material in his passage so that he secures the sense of unity and of progress. He also aims at and arrives at some definite goal. He simply deals with the Scriptures in larger chunks than does the textual preacher. The best results in my judgment can be secured by the connected, systematic exposition of some one book in the Bible for weeks or for months together. There is commonly some

unifying idea in each book, around which a series of ten or twenty or thirty sermons may well be built.

The advantages of this type of preaching are many. It has the historic warrant of being apostolic. The early fathers utilized it. The Apostles in their preaching frequently expounded some passage from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Master in his opening address at Nazareth chose a passage from Isaiah, interpreted it, and assured his hearers that this Scripture was being fulfilled before their eyes. The Sermon on the Mount, in large measure, is a criticism, an interpretation and a logical development of the law of the Jewish Church as contained in the Old Testament.

The expository method of preaching insures a more thorough knowledge of the Bible on the part of the preacher himself. He does not now snatch out one stray text as a dog might pick up a likely-looking bone for temporary use—he takes a considerable section of this body of truth, as a farmer might hang up in his meat-house in the fall of the year a whole quarter of beef, with its layers of fat and tenderloin, intending to cut off from time to time such steaks and roasts as might be served up to meet the needs of his family.

The expository preacher sets out by a course of systematic study to master the contents of some considerable section of Scripture with the same generous intent. He means to feed his people from that body of truth as upon the meat that perisheth not, but endures unto everlasting life.

This method of preaching also develops a more thorough knowledge of the Bible on the part of the people.

They can be induced to read a certain book, methodically and repeatedly, during those months while their minister is preaching from it. They will talk about it to their children and to their friends when they are sitting in their houses and when they are walking by the way. They will write its finest passages upon the doorposts of their minds. They will have its deeper meanings as frontlets before their eyes. They may be led to purchase and to use simple, popular commentaries upon it, thus enabling them to enter more profoundly into its full significance.

The expository form of preaching gradually develops both in the pulpit and in the pew the Scriptural point of view, than which there is none better. By using the Scripture in this larger way, all the great doctrines of faith and prayer, of atonement, of regeneration, of inspiration, and all the great moral problems as well, are viewed in the light of Scripture taken in the large. The people are delivered from the whole habit of judging the Bible by some stray sentence in it. The peddling, pelting use of texts is banished by this better method. The people are encouraged to put their trust in the general trend and drift of the Bible's teaching, to shape their belief and conduct by the main conclusions to which it brings them, and to develop their attitudes by the whole point of view which it gradually induces.

The man who would paint good pictures goes to France or to Italy that he may spend days and weeks and months in the Louvre at Paris or in the Pitti and the Uffizi Galleries at Florence. He stays there in the presence of Rembrandt and Raphael, Rubens and Titian until his

canons of taste are finely and firmly established so that only the beautiful things seem beautiful. The amateur musician lives where he hears Beethoven and Wagner, Schubert and Brahms, until ragtime and jazz and all the other musical ores of low grade have become an offense to his ear. Only the nobler melodies and harmonies are now acceptable to his cultivated taste. In similar fashion the people in a congregation accustomed to live in the presence of the sublime truths of Scripture become trained in eye and in ear, in moral judgment and in conscience. They form their taste and they shape their action with reference to the classical ideals and principles of the Bible.

This wider use of Scripture also induces a more honest use of the Bible. The various texts are by the method of expository preaching taken in their setting as part of a general presentation of truth. The varying texts are made to correct and to supplement each other. The men who wrote the Bible did not undertake to say everything at once and the separate statement standing alone often becomes misleading and dangerous. The bigot and the fanatic are commonly developed by taking some single Scriptural truth out of its connection. The small man like the small boat is completely capsized by having one big truth suddenly plumped upon him without the balancing and steadying influence of other truths laid upon the further side of his moral nature. His moral nature would be made to trim more surely if he had some other important truths aboard. The larger use of Scripture has a tendency to develop the well-rounded habit of mind and the moral nature possessed of poise.

The systematic exposition of book after book of the Bible gives also the advantage of order. There are few forms of serious effort which are carried on in such slap-dash, hit-or-miss, go-as-you-please, catch-as-catch-can fashion as the work of preaching. On Tuesday morning the average minister becomes painfully aware that next Sunday is coming. While he was attending the Ministers' Meeting the day before, or otherwise beguiling the time, it has actually gained on him one of the six short laps which lie between him and the day of reckoning. "What shall I preach on next Sunday?" he asks himself. He may feel free to preach on anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in that other place, lying somewhere "darkly between."

He may, if he chooses, wait for some brand new truth which shall come to him through his reading during the week. He may simply consult his own dominant mood, a habit which is liable to over-specialize his utterance. He may, indeed, if he be a clerical opportunist, wait to see what the ravens, that is to say the black-coated newspapers, may bring him in the shape of a first-class sensation with headlines and pictures which he can warm over on Sunday morning into a make-believe sermon to minister to an already over-stimulated and jaded public.

The expository preacher is saved from all this solicitude and indecision. He has a certain program already laid out for him. He is in process of developing the truth of some one of the great books of the Bible. He wastes no time, therefore, in making his decision, but sets to work at once upon the task in hand. If the passage just ahead should be the account of Solomon sending up to

Hiram, King of Tyre, for cedar trees to build the temple, the minister gets down to business at once and pegs away on those cedar trees until something has to come.

This method need never become a bondage. No fixed schedule of topics need be announced in advance. The minister may make his own program as he goes along. He may even use upon occasion the given passage for the evening rather than for the morning congregation should such a change seem wise. He can drop it altogether on any particular Sunday to make room for a Christmas or an Easter sermon, or for an appeal in connection with the taking of a missionary collection.

He will sometimes use a whole chapter of Scripture as the basis for his sermon, sometimes two chapters, sometimes only a half or a third of a chapter as may best serve his purpose, having regard always to a certain unity of impression. He can use the other service on Sunday as a kind of free-for-all, guerrilla sort of war against the world, the flesh and the devil, but by following up the plan of expository preaching at one of his services he will ensure to his people a large measure of solid, systematic, Scriptural instruction in the course of every year.

This style of preaching also brings a man naturally and inevitably to some of those difficult themes which the minister left to his own miscellaneous, extemporaneous choices from Sunday to Sunday might avoid. The people may sorely need instruction and moral appeal along some particular line, but the minister may feel that it would be very pointed and perhaps a bit strained for him suddenly to break out on some delicate question.

Take the matter of divorce! The present domestic in-

stability, the high percentage of divorces in this country as compared with the record of other Protestant countries, the light and flippant way in which the whole question of marital fidelity is oftentimes treated in the press and on the stage, make it imperative that the minister of the higher values should have something to say touching our fundamental social institution, the home. He will in all probability have people in his own congregation who have been divorced and remarried—and their sensibilities on this point will be like so many sore thumbs, always obtruding and in the way, and forever getting hurt by the careless contacts of everyday life.

Now if the minister is preaching a series of expository sermons on the Gospel of Matthew he will come naturally and inevitably to that passage which says, "Moses gave you that writing of divorcement because of the hardness of your hearts, but from the beginning it was not so. I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife (except it be for the cause of fornication) and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery."

Here is the teaching of our Lord, the minister may well say! And he may then with entire frankness and without the least suspicion of having gone out of his way to make a personal attack upon a few of the people there before him indicate the direct bearing of that teaching upon some of the practices of modern life.

"I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," the apostle said. He had not selected his themes with delicate consideration for those itching

ears which would welcome only that which matched their own spiritual sloth. And because he had declared the whole counsel of God, he was able to count himself "pure from the blood" of those who might fall under the divine condemnation.

If a man is preaching on the Gospel of Luke, the searching and rigorous teachings of Jesus as to the perils and the obligations of wealth can be brought out with tremendous effect and with no suspicion whatever that the minister in any partisan spirit is singling out one particular class of his hearers for personal attack.

If he is preaching on the Book of Judges the parable of Jotham will naturally come in for an orderly exposition. Its direct bearing on the political carelessness and the apathy of many of our good citizens who pay their pew rent regularly and are pillars in the temple of God, may be most effectively brought out. The trees, you remember, were engaged in the election of a king. The olive tree was nominated. But it pleaded that it could not leave the fatness of its occupation in producing olive oil in order to hold political office. The fig tree was nominated. But it insisted that it could not leave the sweetness of its particular occupation in furnishing the world with figs in order to enter upon a political campaign. The vine was nominated. But the vine was strongly determined not to leave its wine which gladdened the hearts of men for a paltry political position. And thus in the default of all of these reputable citizens of the tree kingdom, the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine, there came forward an old, worthless bramble. And this

good-for-nothing bramble suggested that if the office of king was going begging he would be willing to stand. And so the bramble became king over the trees.

It will be good for your bankers and your merchants, your manufacturers and your college professors to hear this word of the Lord in the day when they are so occupied with the fatness and the sweetness of their callings, in the day when they are so in love with all those things which make glad the hearts of men, as to allow the political brambles of the city oftentimes to take to themselves the high responsibility of administering the civic affairs.

If the pastor is resolved to declare his bottom thought, his most serious and intense conviction touching the fate of continued disobedience to the word of Christ, of persistent opposition to the will of God, he need not announce some sensational sermon on "Hell, its location, duration and probable population" after the manner of some,—a manner repellent to men of serious mind in the pulpit and in the pew. He will in the natural order of his exposition come to those searching parables of the Talents and of the Ten Virgins and to that solemn judgment scene in Matthew or to the parable of Dives and Lazarus in the Gospel of Luke. And this treatment of difficult themes in the course of an orderly unfolding of the full contents of some particular book of Scripture is far and away the most effective way to use them.

There is commonly some one great idea which runs through each book ready and able to bind an entire series of expository sermons into a certain unity. The sermons on Genesis as the book of beginnings, the beginning of

the world, of human life, of evil, of sacrifice, of crime, of visible judgments upon evil, of covenants, of diversity of interest, of the Hebrew race and all the rest! The book of Exodus as the book of deliverance—the deliverance from Egypt, from industrial bondage, from political slavery, from the weight of foolish and debasing superstitions, from inadequate moral standards, from the whole list of evils which differentiated the old life in Egypt from the new life to be lived in the land of promise!

The Gospel of Matthew is the Gospel of the kingdom, compiled by a Hebrew for Hebrews. It has as its characteristic phrase, these words "that it might be fulfilled." It has to do with the spiritualizing of the old law. It holds more quotations from the Old Testament than any other Gospel, and it supplies most fully the nexus, between the preparatory experiences of those Hebrews and those richer experiences wherein the highest hopes of the nation had their clear chance of fulfillment. These peculiar characteristics of the first Gospel will give to a course of sermons on Matthew a certain sense of unity.

The Gospel of Mark is the Gospel of action, having in it none of the longer discourses of Jesus, no Sermon on the Mount, no addresses in the Upper Room, fewer of the parables than either of the other Gospels, but packed with narratives of the deeds of Jesus—its characteristic word, "straightway!" From start to finish it travels in marching order the high road of action.

The Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of the Son of Man, written by a physician with a strong humanitarian instinct, filled with sympathy for the under man, for the publican, for the Samaritan, for the lost sheep, the lost

coin, the lost boy, for the poor woman who was a sinner in Simon's house and for the rich man Zaccheus who was a sinner in his own house, for the sufferer on the Jericho road relieved by a hated, heretical Samaritan whose only title to recognition was his kind heart, and for the penitent thief on the cross carried along by the sympathy and mercy of Jesus into paradise—all these touches peculiar to Luke give it that distinctive quality of the Gospel of the Son of Man with its intense humanitarian feeling.

The Gospel of John is the Gospel of the Son of God. It portrays our Lord mainly in his relation to the individual soul. It has next to nothing in it about the Kingdom of God or about those problems of social organization which stand in the way of the realization of the kingdom. This Gospel is made up in large measure of personal conversations between Jesus and some individual, —conversations with his mother at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, with Nicodemus a master in Israel, with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, with the sufferer lame for thirty-eight years at the pool of Bethesda, with the man who was blind from his birth, and so on! Here is the Good Shepherd calling his own sheep by name. He deals with them in that intimate personal contact which is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel.

You can see at once how this method of expository preaching may therefore not only make possible those desirable qualities of unity, progress and a goal in each sermon—you may so build your course of sermons around some great cardinal principle as to bestow those three desirable qualities upon the whole series based as they are upon some one book of the Bible. And the orderly, sys-

tematic, well-rounded instruction which results from such a method has the highest sort of value for congregations made up of people who, owing to the hurry and the stress of modern life, do not read their Bibles for themselves as did their elders and betters two generations ago.

I have practiced what I preach in this matter. If I had not done so I should never have had the face to stand here and urge this method of preaching upon you as furnishing the best possible basis for the staple articles of spiritual commerce which we undertake to offer in our sermons. In the last church I served, the First Congregational Church of Oakland, California, where I was pastor for nearly fifteen years, I find from an examination of my record book that during those years, I preached courses of expository sermons to that one congregation as follows:—From the Old Testament, six months on Genesis, three months on Exodus, three months on Joshua, three months on Judges, two months on the life of Elijah as recorded in Kings, two months on Job, six months on Isaiah, two months on the minor prophets. And I had in preparation a six months' course of sermons on first and second Samuel.

In the New Testament, I preached for six months on Matthew, six months on Mark, twelve months on Luke, which to me is the greatest and dearest book in all the Bible, six months on John, six months on Acts, two months on Romans, three months on first and second Corinthians, and two months on the Book of Revelation. When this is added up it means that there was some course of expository sermons in process of delivery for six entire years of my pastorate there. And I believe

that the testimony of at least two-thirds of the people in that church would confirm my own belief that this was the most profitable portion of my preaching from that pulpit.

Some people will take to this method of preaching straight off. Many others can be speedily taught to like it. And those who do not like it may have their needs attended to at the other service or by the church across the way. It was never meant that any one preacher should preach with equal acceptance to all creation. It would be sure to spoil him with spiritual conceit and it would be hard on his brother ministers besides. By this mode of preaching if you will only strive to make it interesting and effective you can readily enlist the attendance of as many people as you really deserve.

This systematic use of Scripture as the basis of our preaching will enable us in the most natural way in the world to bring out the methods and the main findings of modern Biblical scholarship. In stating this point you will notice that I purposely avoid the use of the phrase "Higher Criticism." The very sound of those familiar words is irritating to certain minds in many of our churches. We may feel that this is an altogether unreasonable prejudice but there it is, a thing to be reckoned with. The flocks to which we are called to minister as good shepherds are not made up entirely of teachable and lovable lambs—we shall find there also the more mature rams with stiff necks and horns.

And some of these full grown rams have tremendous convictions about this question of higher criticism. They construe the word "criticism" negatively always—

not at all as we do, as indicating the exercise of discrimination in order to bring out into clearer relief the more valued portions of Scripture by that process of criticism. They think of the critic as a dyspeptic sort of individual picking and mincing over his food. When a good thick wholesome slice of Scripture is laid before him, instead of eating it for his soul's good (asking no questions for scholarship's sake), he begins at once to pick it to pieces. He separates what he regards as the dark meat from the light. He makes little piles of J, E, D, and P on his plate. He becomes by virtue of his scholarship a fastidious and dyspeptic critic of the heavenly manna in the Bible.

Then when the word "higher" is added to the word "critic" there comes that further touch of superciliousness in his attitude which makes him altogether unbearable. He becomes in the minds of many what the late Theodore Roosevelt would have called "an undesirable citizen." The minister will do well to leave that objectionable phrase "the higher criticism" in his study along with all the other theological patois which was never intended for unordained human nature's daily food.

The results of the higher criticism are not all final—many of them are still mere tentative hypotheses. The colors in the Polychrome Bible are not all fast—some of these radiant and beautiful tints will probably change with time and further study—but the method is here to stay. Never again will thoughtful people generally study the Bible as if it were all one solid block of equally inspired and equally authoritative truth. They will not deal with it in the mass, Luke or Leviticus, John or

Judges, every part to be esteemed alike and applied alike to human need. The general method of modern Biblical scholarship is here to stay and it is for us gradually to acquaint our people with that method and with those findings which may be regarded as fairly established.

It will be much better not to label such instruction either as "Higher Criticism" or as "modern Biblical scholarship." The wise parent does not approach his child saying, "Now this bottle contains castor oil. You will not like it. Children never have liked it. It has a very disagreeable taste until you get used to it. But it will be good for you, and it will remove certain things from your system which you are better off without. And whether you like it or not I propose to give you a good big dose of it." Such a parent would need to study the psychology of the child mind for at least another semester. He need not tell the child that the castor oil is ice cream, but he can employ a wiser method of administering his treatment. The new truth about the Bible had better be offered as a natural part of the instruction we bring without any label on it—let it be put forth simply for what it is worth.

It is just as well also for the young minister in a new parish not to be in too great a hurry about promulgating the very latest views which he picked up at the Divinity School or gained in his last weeks' reading of the *Hibbert Journal.* There is nothing dishonest or cowardly in having some regard to the principle of reserve. The young man cannot possibly tell the people all he knows in the first three months of his pastorate. He cannot do it simply because he knows so much. It will take him at

least six months to tell them *all* he knows. It becomes a question therefore as to what shall come first and what second and what third.

And it is not imperative that the more belated minds in that parish which may be located somewhat off the turnpike of modern thought, should all be set right in their views as to the composite character of the Pentateuch or the dual authorship of Isaiah, or the late date of Daniel, or the problem of the Fourth Gospel, without the least delay. When the people have come to know their minister and to trust him and to love him as a result of his helpful constructive preaching, they will be in a mood to allow him a much larger latitude in the inculcation of these new views which might at first seem to be revolutionary. They will let him have his two Isaiahs if he wants them,—they would let him have twenty Isaiahs if they thought that he would feel easier in his mind about it.

Milk for babes and strong meat for men! You are not acting dishonorably toward the baby or showing yourself cowardly or insincere if you offer him a bottle of milk or even a satisfying meal of Mellen's food, knowing all the while that you have a big rich porterhouse steak there in the refrigerator. You know full well the splendid nutritive values of good steak, but you know also that so far as the baby is concerned the hour for porterhouse has not yet come. The same wise principles of orderly adaptation are to be regarded in feeding congregations upon the results of the latest Biblical scholarship.

When the better methods of Bible study are thus in-

troduced to a congregation in connection with courses of positive helpful sermons on the books whose date and authorship and component parts naturally come up for consideration, the people receive the new views according to the scriptural method. It is here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, instead of having a whole chapter of Driver or Moffatt flung at them all at once. By this gradual method the needed operation is performed without nervous shock or much loss of blood. The swollen and noxious tumors of ignorance and prejudice are gradually removed. And the people, scarcely realizing what radical changes have taken place in their thinking, find themselves mentally and spiritually convalescent.

And when the preacher is inculcating these newer views in this incidental manner, he is the more likely to do it in a way that is clear, sweet and reasonable, because it is part and parcel of a set of sermons possessed by a very direct spiritual purpose. It is just as easy to be opinionated and disagreeable on the liberal side of the fence as it is on the conservative side. It is just as easy for the off horse to be stiff-necked and hard in the mouth, to be narrow and dogmatic, as it is for the near horse, if he happens to be that kind of a horse. The least note of intellectual contempt for so-called "old fogies" or mental scorn for those who may not be ready to accept his newer and indeed more valid conceptions of the Bible, will at once vitiate all the good influence of the more competent instruction. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without

hypocrisy." And such sound knowledge makes men wise unto salvation and prepares them for good work.

It were better for the man who is to preach upon the findings of the higher criticism to weigh at least one hundred and sixty pounds, to possess a mellow baritone voice, to be a man able to digest his meals without conscious effort and to sleep soundly at night. The man with dyspeptic tendencies or of nervous, irritable habit, with a harsh, rasping voice, might well leave the task of unfolding the more radical views advanced by modern Biblical scholarship to his brethren who possess that more fortunate build.

But where this work of thorough, competent scriptural instruction is carried on in the light of the best that genuine scholarship has brought us and in a mood at once sympathetic and constructive, the outcome will have priceless value. It will help to make this ancient literature habitable and ministrant to the modern mind. It will help to recover it as a mighty spiritual weapon to the hands of those who have felt themselves impelled by impossible views of the Bible to lay it down. There are in all our congregations teachers, lawyers, cultured business men, fathers and mothers, who have found themselves unable to use the Bible in the old mechanical way with any sense of intellectual honesty. They will hail with delight the day when they can use it again in this more vital fashion made possible by a better understanding of the methods of its production and by a truer appreciation of its abiding and classical worth as a means of spiritual ministry.

This work well done will also save from shipwreck of

faith thousands of our young people as they go up to college. When they begin to walk in the light of profounder study in philosophy, and in science, in history and in literature, the light of faith which is in them will not suddenly prove to be darkness. The badly taught youth furnish the major part of those who are said to lose their religious faith as a result of their study at college. There are many more young men and young women falling over the cliff of unbelief in reacting from erroneous views which become impossible by reason of more thorough study than are thus precipitated through their acquaintance with the more modern and more tenable views of Scripture.

"He had in his hand a little book, open." Here was the main instrument of his power when that mighty angel appeared in the vision of the seer as recorded in the book of Revelation. He was clothed with a cloud. He wore a rainbow on his head. His face was shining like the sun because he was a light bearer. He stood, ready for the widest usefulness, his right foot upon the land and his left foot upon the sea. And in his hand as the main instrument of his power he held "a little book open."

He refused the sword of military conquest; he did not take up the coin of a far-reaching commerce; he showed himself indifferent to the swinging censer of some more potent ecclesiasticism casting its spell upon the hearts of men. He held in his hand the little book because his main reliance was to be upon the powerful influence of instruction and persuasion, of moral appeal and spiritual entreaty.

We do not know what book it was. We may feel rea-

sonably sure, however, that it was not a trigonometry. It was probably the best book on which the angel could lay his hand. And it was a *little* book—not a ponderous tome of theological lore; it was not even an elaborate leather-bound octavo family Bible large enough to contain all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and weighing some fourteen pounds. It was a little book concise and usable. It was perhaps a compact statement of those essential spiritual verities freed from the inevitable deposits left by the ruder practices of antiquity, freed also from those local and temporary elements which must of necessity recede in interest by the gradual cancellation wrought by the process of spiritual development. We may not go astray in thinking of the little book which God's messenger held in his hand open, as containing the net result of wise, patient, discriminating study, setting forth in briefer compass and in clearer phrase those divine essentials in our Bible which are able to make men wise unto salvation and to furnish them thoroughly for all good work.

Here then is our task—we are to put the contents of that little book into the minds and into the hearts of those who hear, with all the saving power which inheres in those sublime truths. And because this vital portion of the Scriptures does furnish us "a book of final values for all who would live nobly," we make it the sufficient and enduring basis of our preaching.

III

THE CONTENT OF THE SERMON

IN the previous lecture I sought to indicate that the basis of the sermon was to be found in the teaching of Scripture. The topical or textual sermon will grow naturally out of some one statement of Scripture. The expository sermon will come from the more extended and systematic interpretation of a larger portion of Scripture. There will be added a certain power and authority to our preaching by the very fact that it does root down into this literature which now holds, and in my judgment, will continue to hold, a central and commanding place in the religious life of the world.

But in order that the sermon should find its points of contact with modern life, there will come of necessity the importation of material from many other sources. I wish, therefore, in this lecture to speak on the assembling of the material which will make up the body of the sermon.

In the order of time, I believe the material should be gathered before the plan is definitely made. If you were building a house you would have the blue prints first. Then you would fare forth to assemble the requisite quantities of stone, boards, bricks, mortar, glass and all the rest to carry out your plan.

But the making of a sermon is not carpenter work—it is a much more vital process. The best sermons grow. They grow mainly out of a man's interiors. The sermon

is the showing forth, the manifestation of the man himself. And because sermons do thus grow, the best plans are conceived and developed in the immediate presence of the material to be utilized and with a clear vision of the end to be sought in the preparation and the preaching of that particular sermon.

When you are ready to assemble your material for the sermon, enter into your closet with your text and shut the door. Shut out, for the time being, all the commentaries, shut out the Bible dictionary, and the religious encyclopedia. Shut out all the books of sermons and of illustration, upon which you might be tempted to lay your hands. Sit down there with your subject before the Father who seeth in secret. By the exercise of your own unaided strength compel that text to give you, alone and single-handed, a fuller measure of its deeper meaning. It was Richter who said, "Do not read until you have thought yourself hungry. Do not write until you have read yourself full."

Brood over your text and your topic. Brood over them until they become mellow and responsive. You will hatch out of them a whole flock of promising ideas as you cause the tiny germs of life there contained to expand and develop.

Then in a more strenuous mood wrestle with your theme as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Say to it as you hold it off at arm's length, "Tell me thy name. Show me thy nature. I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

It will be all the better if this process can go on for a long time and not be postponed until Saturday forenoon when you are actually making your final preparation for

next Sunday. If a minister can hold a certain truth in his mind for a month, for six months perhaps, for a year it may be, before he preaches on it he will find new ideas perpetually sprouting out of it, until it shows an abundant growth. He may meditate on it as he walks the streets, or as he spends some hours on a train, when his eyes are too tired to read.

He may indeed brood upon it in the night-time. It is better for the minister not to take his church or his sermon to bed with him habitually—a pulpit is a splendid thing to preach from, but it is not a good bed-fellow. Yet, for all that, I have gotten some of my own best sermons at night. I have sometimes gotten out of bed in the middle of the night to put down the thoughts which came to me, for fear I might forget them before morning. But however and whenever it is done, your final work of preparation will be made more expeditious and effective when you actually settle down to put the sermon in shape for the following Sunday, if there has been a fruitful period of preliminary brooding.

When you are actually engaged in assembling the material for a particular sermon, write down everything that comes to you bearing upon that text and topic. Write down what you saw in the text when you first chose it. Write down all the associated ideas which now occur to you. You may not use them all but it is well to put them down.

Write down the main outstanding ideas which that topic suggests, of course, and the lesser ones as well. You want the whole family, big and little, in plain sight when you come to shape up your message. Write down any

fact in history, or any bit of poetry, or any useful application, or any valuable illuminating illustration, or any coördinate passage of Scripture which occurs to you as suitable for your use.

Some great big thoughts will come—regular sequoia trees like the ones in California. You have no business to preach if ideas do not come to you at times so big and so inspiring that they set you walking the floor and talking to yourself out loud through sheer joy of mental possession and of spiritual discovery. And some quite ordinary thoughts will come, not sequoias at all but oaks and elms, with good material in them—put them all down. And some little spindling thoughts will come, mere saplings, small white birches scarcely large enough for hoop poles or for lath, mere underbrush in the forests of thought—put them down, too. They may grow while you are getting your sermon into shape and prove valuable after all.

Put all these ideas of yours down in writing, just a few words, enough to fix the idea, and keep your mind reaching for more all the time as if it were never to see another book as long as it lived. This is the way to train the mind in productiveness. You will by this method keep your own mental processes fresh, original, creative. If you swamp the mind right at the start by emptying into it three or four barrels of ideas from the commentaries and another bucket full out of Hastings' Dictionary, and then sprinkle it copiously with what you have dipped out of some encyclopedia of illustration, or of "poetry and song," your mental powers will be almost sure to loaf on you. These mental faculties of ours are touchy in the

extreme at this point. You have no idea how sensitive they are until you have had it out with them a few times. If you load your mind up from the outside, right at the start without giving it a chance to think, it will turn upon you in a fine state of pout. It will arch its neck and say to you in haughty fashion, "Very well, if you think I don't know anything and can't produce anything of my very own, then I will take my doll and go home."

Put down all of those ideas which you have brought to the birth yourself, unaided. They are more precious for your mental unfolding than rubies and diamonds and much fine gold. Put them down, preferably on scraps of paper, backs of old letters, fragments of envelopes, waste paper, anything which comes to your hand. This is much better every way than to use nice, long, clean sheets of foolscap. It is not a mere matter of economy,—you will find it easier to arrange and organize these loose bits when you come to set your material in order.

Keep on putting down all the ideas which come to your mind, thinking hard all the while. You need not hurry this process. It is one of the most important mental transactions in which you will be privileged to engage. It is this method which causes the mind to grow in real productive power.

Wait for ideas! Wait patiently for them, but not passively nor sleepily. Let your mind all the while be alert and alive. The mouth of your mind should at such times fairly water for ideas. Wait for them as a girl waits for her lover, eagerly, hungrily, wistfully. Wait for them as a mother waits for the sound of her child's voice when he comes home from his first day of school, or from his

first evening out at a party. Wait in that sort of active expectation and your very attitude will hurry the coming of those ideas. The very thought of the maiden, waiting in all her loveliness and impatient for his coming, quickens the feet of every lover who has any red blood in his veins. The latent ideas in your own brain and the ideas which are out yonder in waiting will in like manner feel the tug and pull of the earnest expectation you are exercising, and that will quicken their coming.

While you are doing this, open all the front doors of your mind, and all the back doors, and the side doors, and the windows. Be just as approachable and inviting as you know how to be. Memory will be bringing back what you have read and seen and felt. The association of ideas will bring forward the first cousins and the second and third cousins of those ideas which you have already put down, together with their uncles and their aunts. You will presently gather in all the more distant relatives of your text in the cognate truths which will come to you until you will have a great family of thoughts. They will outnumber the household of Brigham Young and will be possessed of a spiritual quality infinitely superior.

You will find also as you linger in this process that entirely new ideas will come to the birth. You will see aspects of the truth which never rose upon your vision before. Some days the material for your sermon will come in a regular down-pour. Other days there will be a nice gentle rain of refreshing ideas and other days only a thin sprinkle and drizzle of thought. This will depend in considerable measure upon what you ate the night before and on how well you slept and on how the baby be-

haved through the wee, small hours. It will depend also upon what subject you have in hand, and on how well you warm up to that particular line of effort. But do it nevertheless—I would almost say that this will be the most profitable time you will spend in the preparation of the sermon and in the development of your own mental powers.

We need to use every possible resource to make our preaching fresh, interesting, vital. People get dreadfully used to us at best, when we have preached to them for ten or fifteen or twenty years from the same pulpit. And dullness, pokiness, monotony, "make the word of God of no effect" as we preach it quite as surely as all the deadly heresies condemned by the Councils of the Church. It was Prof. Ernest Hocking of Harvard University who said, "A theory is false if it is not interesting. A proposition which falls on the mind so dully as to excite no enthusiasm has not attained to the level of truth. Though the words be accurate, the import has leaked away from them and the meaning is not conveyed. Whatever doctrine tends to leave men unstrung, content, complacent, and at ease, is a treachery and a deceit. We have to require of our faith not what is agreeable to the indolent spirit but what is at once a spur and a promise."

You must therefore produce something that people will listen to with interest—if they will not listen, it is just the same as if you did not say anything at all. No matter how good your medicine is under competent analysis, if you cannot induce the people to take it, it will not do them any good. The element of freshness and variety is an element of power. "He spake, not as the Scribes"

—their speech was filled to the brim with dull moral platitudes. The people were bored beyond measure by the utterances of the Scribes. But His utterance, in the very style of it as well as in the substance of it, was as fresh as a bunch of roses with the dew of heaven still upon them.

When you are assembling the material for a sermon allow a very free immigration of all sorts of material into your mind for the time being! Let the bars down! Have no strict Ellis Island regulations to keep out ideas. Let them all in whether they come first cabin or steerage,—you can sort them out later. You can reject the unsuitable material when you come to the immediate work of preparing your sermon. You can also lay aside those ideas which are not germane to your immediate purpose to be used in some later sermon. If you are planning to preach on the North Pole, you may think of something very brilliant and helpful to be said about the South Pole. Put it down immediately on one of those scraps of paper—you cannot use it now, but the day will come when you may want to preach on the South Pole.

When you have gotten your material all together, then grind it all down with a genuinely Christian purpose, serious and vital. You will find that you can use a great variety of material if you only lay hold of it in that determined thorough-going fashion. The hen eats all sorts of things, nice, clean corn and barley, bugs and worms, scraps from the table, bits of bone and gravel, old, odd ends of almost anything that can be swallowed. And it all reappears in the general make-up of the hen as light meat and dark meat and as good fresh eggs. The hen

has strong digestive and assimilative powers. Pretty much anything is good grist which comes to her mill. You also need something corresponding to an intellectual gizzard to deal in similar fashion with your varied material as you come to shape it into useful sermons.

In the earlier years of one's ministry it is well to spend a great deal of time in doing what I have been here describing at some length. It stretches the mind. It develops in it reach and grasp. It exercises its genuine creative capacity. It keeps it from becoming soft, fat, lazy, as all those parasites are which feed perpetually upon the vitality of other beings. It increases a man's originality and individuality as a preacher. You cannot prepare a sermon at all unless you have something to say —something of your very own. It is tragic where this stinging comment is made upon some lazy minister's sermon—"He had nothing to say and he said it."

You will not feel like leaving the ministry and going into the life insurance business if your mind does not show itself as full of ideas as the Britannica Encyclopedia is of information, right off. Your general content and your own personal productiveness will grow. They will grow by hard study in your own chosen line; they will grow by your general reading in history, biography, poetry, essays, fiction, and all the rest—the highest office of reading is to be found in the way it gives mental stimulus, thus developing productiveness in the mind of the reader. I care much less for a book which is full of thoughts, laid in neat rows along its pages, than I do for one which by its own rugged, stimulating challenge causes me to think thoughts of my own.

You will grow by your own independent observation and reflection. You will grow by travel, in your own land, and, I trust, in other lands. You will grow by the experiences of life and death, by the sins and sorrows, the struggles and the defeats, the triumphs and the glories in which you will either personally participate or sympathetically share. The rightly used mind will perpetually become more and more productive by this process.

When you have taken a thousand sermons out of your mind you will feel much better able to take out another thousand than you sometimes feel now in taking out one more after you have preached a dozen or so to the same congregation. I know this by personal experience at once painful and blessed. In my first church, after I had preached about three months, I felt that I had told the people all that I knew or was ever likely to know, three times over. I looked at those Sundays stretching away into the future interminably with such dismay as would have sent me out of the ministry had I not been ashamed to confess failure at the end of so short a period of trial.

But I have been preaching now for thirty-three years and in round numbers about a hundred sermons a year. And I never felt so sure as I do right now that I could keep on indefinitely, taking sermons out of my mind Sunday after Sunday with some measure of freshness and of worth in each one. And this has resulted from incessant drill and training, stretching out for a full third of a century.

You will find that the sermons you enjoy preaching the most and the ones which actually accomplish the most good in the lives of your people will be those sermons

which you take most largely out of your own interiors. They are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, the children of your own mental labor, the output of your own creative energy. The sermons which are garbled and compiled will always have a kind of second-hand, warmed-over flavor about them. The sermons which live and move and enter into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God, the sermons which enter into the hearts of men causing them to mount up with wings like eagles and to walk in the way of duty and not faint—these real sermons are the ones which are actually born from the vital energies of the man who utters them.

Now, after you have conscientiously and resolutely put forth all that independent, unaided effort, you are ready for the books. The commentaries will not do you any harm now if they desire to have a word with you. If you had resorted to them at first you might have been tempted to steal most of your ideas. You find now that you have already dug out some of the best things which the commentaries contain—they are yours. They are yours by the right of discovery. You will feel glad of course and humbly grateful that Driver and Sanday, George Adam Smith, and George F. Moore have shown themselves equally wise and competent in advancing some of the very same interpretations which have occurred to you. You will not now be swamped nor hurt by the suggestions made to you by those gentlemen possessed as they are of thorough scholarship and of remarkable insight.

Let me say (to the younger ministers especially) for your own highest development, that it would be well to avoid the purely homiletic commentaries. Matthew

Henry, for example, was a learned and devout man in his day and generation. His mind was full of beautiful thoughts. But his commentaries are a delusion and a snare to every young minister. I had a set of them given to me in my early ministry and I used them for about two years. I found that they were not to my profit and I gave them away. They were the declared enemies of independent study and of original thinking. I also had a feeling that I might lose my own soul if I kept myself surrounded with such books. So I unselfishly gave them to a home missionary—to imperil his soul perhaps.

The commentaries of the homiletic type develop bad intellectual habits. You will be tempted to pick out ready-made sermons with introductions and divisions, with applications and exhortations all cut and dried—especially dried—and ready to use. The clothes which are made to order always fit better than the ready-mades; and the sermons which are cut out and put together especially for the congregation which is to hear them, are always better than the ready-made articles, even when the ready-mades are found in such respectable stores as those kept by Lange and Matthew Henry.

I would also cast out all those tempting encyclopedias of illustration. There are volumes on sale which contain vast collections of illustrations and stories applicable to every situation in life. They are all there arranged in alphabetical order and "ready to serve," like the soups and the spaghetti advertised in the street cars, only not nearly so appetizing. But the man who preceded you may have used the same encyclopedia of illustration. The people in the congregation may have already eaten all of

those "fifty-seven varieties" of canned goods several times over. Your predecessor in that pulpit may indeed have so far forgotten himself—even ordained flesh sometimes shows itself weak at this point, though the spirit be willing—as to tell some of those thrilling stories as experiences of his own. If you begin to tell them all over again, as personal experiences which have come to you, your people will have thoughts in their hearts.

The imported article, especially where a man gets it in such large invoices as are found in those encyclopedias of illustration, is never quite equal in flavor or in effectiveness to the home grown. Eschew these shipments of manufactured illustrations and keep a sharp eye out all the while for suitable illustrations growing in your own familiar fields—there are no others so good.

In a second-hand book store in Boston I once saw displayed three big fat volumes entitled "Thirty Thousand Thoughts,"—marked down to $10.00. This was reasonable, surely. It meant thirty thoughts for a cent. I do not know whether the tariff enacted by the Democratic Congress during that winter increasing the number of commodities on the free list had aided in this direction or not. It assured me at any rate that the high cost of living had not seriously affected the price of thought.

In these bargain counter volumes were collections of ideas on faith, hope, love, prayer, the Bible, the church, —on everything in fact from Adenoids to Zaccheus, arranged in alphabetical order. We may well shun all such collections as being a menace to any wholesome development of one's own mental powers. You do not want thoughts which can be sold at the street corners thirty

of them for a cent. They are altogether too cheap to be thrown out upon a congregation of thoughtful people who honor you by their presence in your sanctuary. You want those thoughts which come forth as a result of your own intellectual travail and labor.

I have grave doubts also as to the value of those elaborate scrap cabinets for filing newspaper clippings. If one takes a goodly number of religious and secular papers and makes generous use of his scissors, he may in a short time have a very considerable accumulation of material. But the material is liable to become stale before you are ready to use it. It is something like putting aside a few crackers with some bits of cheese and bologna sausage in the expectation that you may possibly want them for the picnic sometime next summer. If your eyes are open and your mind is alert, you will gather as you go along all the fresh material of that sort which you will really need in the work of preaching.

You can see at once the advantage of doing this work in the assembling of your material for the body of your sermon before you touch a book. You will already have gotten many of the very things which you will find in the books. You will not feel any sense of intellectual dishonesty now in using them. On the contrary, you will have a free, independent joy arising legitimately from your own discoveries. You will not smother your own intellectual impulse, your own creative ability, by dumping in a lot of reading matter at the start before your mind has had a reasonable opportunity to show what it can do.

You will also learn better how to read when the time

comes for reading. After you have been thinking long and seriously upon some text or upon some more extended passage of Scripture, you will be ready to use your commentaries with more intelligence and discrimination. You will know where to pause and rest the whole weight of your interest and where you may pass lightly with a kind of hop, skip and jump. The work you have already done will be a preparation for the better utilization of other men's investigations. And you will constantly increase your own power of productiveness, whereas the other method tends always to stifle it. When any man by his attitudes and methods indicates to his own mind that he is relying upon it, the mind has a way of reacting under the power of that expectation and of showing itself surprisingly competent.

It is well for the young preacher especially to avoid sameness in his sermon plans. He will greatly weaken his power if he undertakes to pour all the refined silver and gold of the Bible into one or two narrow sets of molds. He had better vary the pattern as he mints the unsearchable riches into coins which will serve as a circulating medium in the King's business.

We had a man in the Divinity School in my day who came in one Monday morning from his amateur Sunday preaching in great glee. He told us what an interesting and moving discourse he had preached the day before from this text, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." He made three bites of it. 1. The thing hidden—"the word of God," which gave him opportunity to expatiate at length upon the Bible. 2. The place hidden, "the heart"—this hiding of the

word of the Lord was to be no mere intellectual process but a genuine heart experience. 3. The purpose for which it was hidden there—that "I might not sin against Thee." The whole process was to result in renewed character.

Now that is a clear and useful sort of outline. He had good reason for the joy that was in him. But the following Monday he came in again in exultant mood. He blandly announced to his fellow students that it was a rich lead he had struck and that he proposed to follow it up. He had preached the day before on this fine text,—"I have graven Thee on the palms of my hands." 1. The thing graven, 2. The place graven, 3. The purpose for which it was graven. And he may be going on yet for all I know, along that same narrow line, singing all his tunes in the same key, on the same pitch, with no variation whatever except the substitution of a new set of words from time to time. He has belonged to the "itinerancy" I know and has enjoyed to the full the privileges of that transient relation. And it may be that the monotonous use of a particular style of outline has had its share in rendering his pastorates many and brief.

Let your plan be your own—strictly, exclusively, preeminently, your own. The sermon plan should be a thing as personal as a toothbrush. You will consult your own interest if you shun, as you would shun the plague, all those books of "sermon plans" wherein skeletons long since lifeless are steadily grinning at the foolish men who have been beguiled into walking in that graveyard in quest of outlines. Those books are known among the ungodly as "First Aids to the Lazy."

Those plans are not yours simply because you have

purchased the book which contains them, any more than the plays of Shakespeare are yours to utter as your own simply because you have possessed yourself of a copy of Shakespeare. "The quality of mercy is not strained," but it is by no means elastic enough to be stretched out and made to cover such intellectual theft as that.

You may gather material from all sorts of sources. You will openly quote in some cases. You will digest and assimilate other material until the result of your reading reappears in that which has the full taste and quality of your own intellectual life in it. But your sermon plan should be every time the fruit of your own intellectual loins. We cannot afford to have any adopted children wearing our names at this point. An awkward outline of your own will be ten times more effective than some splendid one which you have cribbed from Frederick W. Robertson or from Alexander Maclaren.

It is wise not to have any such book of skeletons in your library. In some moment of weakness or of weariness, or in some unusually crowded week you might be tempted to use it as a makeshift. The wretched thing might climb down off the shelf and overthrow your integrity. If any student here now owns such a book, I will gladly excuse him if he will go at once to his room and burn it. When the flames lick up the pages of such a book of "Sermon Plans" it will be a worthy and an acceptable burnt offering to the Lord.

When you have assembled an abundance of good material in this way and have put it into effective shape by a proper arrangement of it, you can learn, if you will, to preach without manuscript. It is far and away the hap-

piest and the most effective method of preaching. It is the *man* and not the *manuscript* which makes the spiritual impression. The man may indeed write and read, but even then it is the personality of the man who did the writing and does the reading, rather than the paper thing lying there on the desk, which brings results.

The method of preaching without manuscript demands a more generous stock of ideas. The somewhat meager accumulation of thought cannot by this method be made to go as far as would be possible by the skillful use of literary attenuation in a carefully prepared manuscript. The method of preaching without manuscript also takes it out of a man by its more exacting demands upon one's nervous force as the other method does not. But it is worth all it costs, to the preacher himself and to the people who do the listening.

In my judgment it is the ideal way to preach and every young man may well strive with all his might to achieve success in it. No man should be willing to give it up and fall back upon the crutches of a fully written manuscript which has to be read leaf by leaf, until he has fought a good fight to attain to the other method and has been driven back by the sense of his own failure to the very last ditch.

In saying this I am well aware that the written sermon has certain advantages.

1. It is the easier way to preach—the labor of writing a sermon in full to be read from manuscript is nothing when compared with the real work of preparing and delivering a sermon without manuscript.

2. The fully written sermon requires less material, for

the ideas may be elaborated and worked out in all their implications in a manner that is practically impossible for a man speaking without manuscript.

3. The written sermon takes much less vitality in actual delivery, for the manuscript preacher is entirely freed from the anxiety which the other preacher must of necessity suffer for several hours before entering his pulpit and perhaps during the entire time spent in delivery. The man who preaches without a manuscript will now and then suffer a complete breakdown which will keep him scared and anxious for the next two or three years. The manuscript preacher has it all there in black and white, and nothing but a San Francisco earthquake or some other untoward calamity can interfere with the delivery of his message as he has planned it.

4. The written sermon is almost sure to exhibit a more finished literary style and to make possible those niceties of expression, those more delicate shades of meaning, which the speaker without manuscript must sacrifice. The man who cuts loose from a manuscript will almost inevitably paint with a larger brush and find himself unable to put into his pictures some of the more delicate lines.

5. The manuscript preacher is in a better position to preserve permanently the results of his work and have it as a basis for the expenditure of further effort. He can take an old sermon and with no loss in its former value rewrite it in such a way as to add fifty per cent to its interest and effectiveness.

6. The manuscript preacher is likely also to be more accurate in his statements. It is always easier to tell the

truth in a small room like the pastor's study where the sermon is written than it is in a large auditorium, seating a thousand people perhaps, where the sermon is delivered. The power of seeing things as they are and of reporting upon them accurately often varies inversely as the number of square yards in the room where the process is carried on.

I may possibly be making out such a strong case in favor of manuscript preaching as not to be able to say anything convincing against it. But being myself a preacher without manuscript I feel that it would be unjust not to give the other method its dues. All this can be said and said heartily in favor of manuscript preaching. But there are great disadvantages to be charged up against it—more than enough I believe to leave a good sized credit on the other side of the column when the trial balance is finally struck. These four counts at least can be made against it.

1. Nine people out of every ten, outside of purely academic circles, are strongly prejudiced against it. They may possibly be trained to like it or to endure it just as a certain percentage of the population can be taught to like tripe. But it is always a cultivated taste. The great majority of the people never come to think of the manuscript sermon as one of the staple articles of diet to which their appetites instinctively turn with relish.

2. There is no other calling where a man in making a popular appeal would trust for his results to a carefully read paper. The lawyer does not stand before his jury with a paper, even though it might have been written in a style which combined all the excellences of Blackstone

and of Edmund Burke. He speaks to them directly, studying all the while their attitudes, their faces, their eyes. If he had some kind of an X-ray which would make plain to him the operations of their minds and the articulations of their respective wills, he would want that turned on so that he might watch for results, as they that watch for the morning.

The political orator campaigning for votes would not mount the hustings with a paper to be read, even though the address were written in Addison's best English and the thought as profound as that in Plato's Republic. None of these men would insulate himself by a thick pile of paper from those with whom he would make connections and to whom he would impart himself as by some mysterious electric current.

The actor on the stage does not appear before a popular audience reading his lines from a well-thumbed volume or from a typewritten manuscript. Imagine Edwin Booth as he took the part of Brutus, the noblest Roman of them all in the play of Julius Cæsar, or Henry Irving as he portrayed before our eyes the devilishness of Mephistopheles in Goethe's Faust or Forbes Robertson delineating in his own delicate exquisite fashion, the strange character of Hamlet—imagine any one of those men reading from paper those words which live and move and burn. It is unthinkable. And they attempt this harder task of uttering their words without manuscript merely to obtain a corruptible crown.

3. In many cases also the use of a manuscript develops a bad style of elocution. By the very act of reading the head is often held in an unnatural position. The eyes

are taken away from those to whom the words are actually addressed and are fixed upon paper. The mood of intellectual abstraction is frequently induced by the very attention given to the manuscript itself. All this tends to rob one's speech of that sympathetic quality which insures effective delivery. When men say in unstudied fashion exactly what they feel at the moment, they are likely to get their inflections right and to have their rhetorical pauses and all the rest of it straight.

4. The use of the manuscript permits and even encourages an ornate and somewhat remote literary style which no one would use were he looking steadily into the faces of the men to whom his message is to be delivered.

You may feel that in this criticism of the sermon read from a manuscript I am putting it strongly. I am indeed laying it on with a trowel, but I feel that in some measure I have earned the right to speak out boldly on this point. I earned that right by the sweat of my brow and of my brain. I have learned whatever effectiveness I may possess in public address by the things that I have suffered. I am constitutionally nervous. In early life I had to undergo the worst sort of embarrassment when I had to do anything in public. The delivery of a five-minute declamation in the Academy before my fellow students put me into a cold sweat. And I often find myself now all in a tremble when I am about to face an audience. I still have to go apart at times and put myself through a set of deep breathing exercises in order to gain poise and self-control before speaking.

In addition to this physical disqualification for public speaking, I had very little natural facility in expression.

When I was on my feet, the right words would not come. I knew what they were—I could have spelled them correctly in a written examination. But when I was in the act of speaking I could not *drag* them out of their hiding places. Whatever command of language I have attained has come through a long period of hard, serious discipline both in writing and in speaking.

I began as a manuscript preacher. For several years in my earlier ministry I wrote each sermon out in full on a Remington typewriter and took it into the pulpit to be read as best I could. And when I broke away from that method and undertook to learn to preach without a manuscript, I was beaten with rods of mortification. Again and again I suffered shipwreck. By day and by night I have been in the deep, right in my own pulpit. I floundered around for many a bad half hour where I knew the water was over my head and was painfully aware of the fact that I had not learned to swim.

In weariness and in painfulness, with backache on Sunday night and headache on Monday morning, in cold chills and in mental nakedness, I have labored at it because I believed that the spoken word could be made more effective than the word read from manuscript. And because of my own struggles and because of the greater joy and usefulness which I have found in the other mode of preaching, I am here to say that almost any man, *almost* any man, can learn to do it, if he is willing to pay the price.

When I was making my earliest attempts along this line I used to take long texts always, so that somewhere within the confines of that section of Scripture I might

find ideas enough to insure my not running out of material. I was preaching one Sunday night in the first church I served in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, from these words—"Wherefore seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." I took the whole statement for my text, for I felt that I had need of every bit of suggestive Scripture anywhere in sight. After preaching that night for exactly eleven minutes, I ran completely out of ideas. I could not think of anything more that could be said on that particular text or upon the general subject of the Christian religion. I was ashamed to stop so soon but I was still more ashamed to keep my mouth going when I had nothing to put into it. I therefore stopped, announced the last hymn and pronounced the benediction wishing that there was a back door in the church or some stately formal recessional which would get me out of sight by some short cut without having to see anybody.

The officers of the church thought that I must have been taken suddenly ill. They came up to the altar to inquire after my health and to express their solicitude with a beautiful sympathy which became to me a thing grievous to be borne. I was ashamed to tell them what had actually happened. But the next day I did go to the principal man in my church and I told him exactly what had occurred. He was a lawyer and he leaned back in his chair and laughed until he almost shook the huge desk in front of him. I can still feel the quiver of the

unseemly merriment which my recital produced in him. But when he recovered himself, he said, "Keep right on! Keep right on, Parson—we would rather have eleven minutes of that sort of preaching than half an hour of the other. I would never risk one of my cases in court by taking in a carefully prepared manuscript to be read to the jury. You are pleading for a verdict and for a much more important verdict than it is ever my lot to secure. Keep your eyes on the jury and talk right at them."

This was comforting and encouraging. And with the hearty approval and the sustaining patience of the officers of my church, I stuck to it until I learned to do it after a fashion. And such as it is, conscious as I am that every such preacher must sacrifice a great deal in literary finish, in carefully balanced and delicately wrought out sentences, I know beyond a peradventure that it has made my own work in the pulpit more acceptable and more useful than my manuscript preaching could ever have been.

The people are patient and sympathetic with the man who is striving to learn to speak in that direct way. They like the courage of it—not many of them would ever attempt such a thing. They would not hazard it even for a single address of half an hour or of fifteen minutes to say nothing of speaking steadily from the same pulpit year in and year out without a manuscript. They like to see a man standing right up before the target, able to shoot without a rest.

I do not use the term "extemporaneous preaching," you notice. There is no such thing. There is extemporaneous

twaddle and extemporaneous prattle and gabble, oftentimes loud and unctuous and greasy. But real preaching is never extemporaneous. The man who rushes into the pulpit with no preparation beyond the possession of a few scattering ideas (to which his title may be anything but clear), trusting to the inspiration of the occasion and the big physical "rousements" he intends to put in, to do the rest, is not an extemporaneous preacher—he is an extemporaneous rascal and an unmitigated nuisance. He ought to be put down with a strong hand and an outstretched arm—and I should like to be the Presiding Elder called upon to do the job.

The man who preaches without manuscript reaches levels of joy in his preaching which I am sure the preacher from manuscript knows not of. He has more of the sense of high privilege; he gains a larger measure of that sense of response from the eyes and the minds and the hearts of the people whom he is steadily watching: he has more even of the sense of openness to God because of his more daring reliance upon the aid of the Spirit who works within us to will and to perform his good pleasure in those moments when we are working out our own salvation as efficient preachers of his Gospel.

It is all the better if the speaker can stand out free and clear before his congregation with no wooden breastworks acting as a hindering barrier. He will more readily swing clear as he feels that he is there unimpeded, with his truth and with the Lord of truth, to minister in direct fashion to the appealing needs which are spread out before him in those eyes which are looking into his own. And the very doing of it with any measure of suc-

cess will put a look of radiant joy into the homeliest face any minister ever wore, causing it to shine.

It is like the difference between swimming with a board or with a set of bladders tied under one's arms, and real swimming. When a man launches out into the deep, leaping in with nothing but his own powers to rely upon, trusting to the water to take care of his venture, he finds, if he has learned to swim, that the buoyant energy of the water is able to keep and to float that which is committed unto it. Then he knows the joy of swimming. And the method of preaching without manuscript is like unto it.

This method of preaching opens the door for those fresh visions of truth which come when a man is most thoroughly alive. You will see those old truths in new relations. You will see farther into their hidden meanings, their implications and their applications. And under the power of the inspiration which comes by such high effort there will come to your mind ever and anon some great new thought so precious that you will be well nigh beside yourself in the joy of possessing it in your own right. There are beautiful and helpful ideas which we strike out in the quiet of our studies and there are also ideas, fairly dynamic in their quality of spiritual stimulus, which are struck out at white heat when the man stands before his people possessed from head to foot with the keen joy of self-impartation in things spiritual.

I have dwelt on this method of preaching because I believe that by the use of it you can steadily add to the really vital elements in your sermons. It enables you to use your congregations and compel them to preach with you as you look into their eyes and through their eyes

into their souls. You are sharing with them your best, reaching all the while for something still better and by the reaction which comes as you watch them and work with them, they aid you in grasping that more complete vision of the truth.

You can also add to your own stock of deep feeling by feeling what they feel as it comes back to you. You can draw them up to your own heart reënforcing your stock of spiritual impulse by that which beats and throbs in them. You can use your own sensibilities and theirs in developing that full measure of enthusiasm and devotion to which we must finally look for the abiding results of successful preaching.

In order to do this most effectively you will need to master your prepared material in advance and to master it thoroughly. In the preparation of an outline it is well for each man to prepare only as much as he can really command and use, without too much reference to it while he is in the act of speaking. The man who prepares a very elaborate outline, with whole paragraphs of exceptional beauty written into it, with illustrations wrought out in exquisite detail, with lovely quotations of poetry which he must turn back to his outline to read, is handicapped from the start. He misses the real points of strength in both styles of preaching. He is forever between the saddle and the ground. He would be all right if he were either walking or riding, but now in his constant recurrence to that elaborate outline, he has one foot in the stirrup with the other hopping along on the ground or waving up and down along the flanks of the horse. He has neither the security of a firm seat in the saddle

nor the humbler satisfaction of standing with both feet firmly on mother earth.

How much outline any man can use to advantage depends upon these two things: (1) Upon the retentive quality of his mind and (2) upon how well the outline is built. Have only so much outline as you can master and use.

If your elaborately prepared outline with its load of detail causes you to stumble in the delivery of your message, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands and two feet, four heads and sixteen subheads to stumble along in ineffectiveness. There are sermons which would add several cubits to their stature by having a capital surgical operation performed upon them in advance.

When you assemble the material of your sermon largely out of your own interiors, when you brood over it lovingly and meditatively in advance, and when you discover new meanings and glories in it, as you stand up to deliver it in such fashion as to cause men's hearts to burn within them, you will inevitably enter into the mood of your theme. This is absolutely imperative. You have heard sermons where the content of the sermon was in one key and the content of the man was in quite another—and inevitably the spiritual discord was something horrible.

If a man is to preach on some great theme he must soak in it until every fiber of his being is saturated with it. He must feel it himself, if he is to make other men feel it to the point of acting upon it. The man who is sour, or harsh, or wooden, cannot in the very nature of the case preach on the divine compassion for men or upon the sac-

rifice of Christ or upon the high office of human sympathy. He cannot in that mood touch any one of these themes with any sense of reality. He does not speak the language in which they were born. It matters not what words he may use, the life of the theme is wanting and the whole utterance is a performance as dead as the movements of some automaton wound up to do its stunt of antics on the stage. You could never say of that man's words, they are *spirit* and they are *life*. His preaching will be vain.

If the minister is to preach on some difficult theme the need for this preliminary brooding is all the greater. No man is competent to preach on future punishment until it almost breaks his heart to declare what he solemnly believes to be the awful fate of continued resistance to the divine will. If a man is accustomed to pray for half an hour over his sermon when he preaches on the love of God, he had better pray for an hour and a half when he is to preach on the fate of the wicked.

The glib, raw, fierce way in which some preachers have preached about "hell" has been like the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. There is a certain popular evangelist to-day of much renown who preaches about the doom of sinful men with a style of invective and a tone of voice that would take the bark off the trees if there were any trees within reach. And we may be certain that such rough work does scratch and wound and repel the sensitive souls of many who fall under the dire influence of such a presentation.

The Master arraigned the Pharisees in that twenty-third chapter of Matthew in words so piercing that it is

almost impossible for us to read them aloud. They fairly scorch our lips, they are so terrible. But I am confident that his tone, his look and his manner were not in any sense harsh or fierce. I should say that those awful words were uttered in a mood of solemn tenderness. His mood was one of infinite disappointment over the moral tragedy wrought out under the false leadership of those Pharisees in the nation which he loved supremely because it was his own.

I am strengthened in this conviction by the fact that the awful arraignment comes to its climax in that heart-break which uttered itself in those words of tenderness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. And ye would not!" How often would I—but ye would not! "Your house is left unto you desolate!" And his own great heart in that hour when he mourned over them, was likewise desolate.

This brooding over your material until you are fully in the mood of the message you wish to convey will help you to create the atmosphere demanded for effective preaching. People cannot hear anything in a vacuum—there is no sustaining medium on which the sound waves may be carried to the listening ear. And the people cannot hear very much of a church service in an atmosphere where there is nothing but oxygen and nitrogen. They might hear a brass band playing. They might hear the vigorous yelling of a set of college boys at a football game or the roar of a stamp mill grinding out the gold from the quartz. But in an atmosphere where there is only

oxygen and nitrogen they will not hear very much of a church service.

If they are to hear the softer and more intensive notes in the message you bring, there must be that atmosphere where spiritual sound waves will carry. There must be a suitable sustaining medium so that your words and your purpose and your feeling may indeed reach the hearts of those for whom the message is intended. Your own high mood of devotion as people see it in your face, as they hear it in the deeper undertones of your voice, as it finds expression in your reading of the Scripture lesson and in your prayer, that mood of devotion will, if it be full and strong, create and maintain that atmosphere where the voice of the Spirit as He speaks through you will reach and find the attentive souls of those who hear.

In these days of wireless, the ships whisper to each other across the wide stretches of open sea. Any one watching the process from the outside would see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing of what was taking place. The receiver has to be adjusted and attuned to the precise wave lengths created by the transmitter where the message is being sent forth.

Hear then the parable of the wireless! By your own worshipful mood and by your ability to lead the thoughts of your people heavenward, it is your high office to adjust the receiving capacity of all those waiting hearts until every one of them will hear and heed the whispers of the Divine Spirit.

IV

THE MEASURE OF THE SERMON

YOU will all agree with me that the sermon has dimensions. It has length, we all know. The people who do the listening are sometimes painfully aware that it has length. And there are unhappily some sermons which seem to have little else—they are sermons mainly of one dimension.

These sermons have length and they have it more abundantly than the hearers would desire. But they are lacking in breadth, in any wide range of sympathy, in any broad vision of the Kingdom, in points of contact with the everyday lives of those to whom they are addressed. They are lacking in depth, in depth of conviction, in any firm grasp of the fundamental principles which underlie all personal well-being and all social advance. They are lacking in height, in height of aspiration, in that outward, upward, Godward reach of faith which carries the real sermon above the dead level of the commonplace moralities.

However it may be in mathematics there is always a fourth dimension in sermons. If the sermon is broad in its sympathies, in the range of its interest, and in the scope of its outlook upon the needs of the world; if it is deep in its grasp of those fundamental, underlying principles and verities which worthily sustain it; and if it is

high, not merely in the level of its actual achievement but in the upward reach of its aspiration, then it adds to its appropriate length the necessary qualities of breadth and height and depth. And by this needed extension it comes to be a well built, symmetrical sermon. The length and the breadth and the height of every sermonic structure should be approximately equal.

But here in this lecture I desire to give more particular attention to one special dimension—let me speak as strongly as I can about the length of the sermon. If any man in the uninstructed goodness of his heart is inclined to look upon this as an unimportant matter, let him ask his laymen. They will give him wisdom liberally and upbraid him besides if he fails to give heed to their well matured judgment. Their minds are all made up on this point. They have convictions as robust as the opinions of John Calvin. And these resolute laymen are all of them opposed, firstly, secondly, thirdly, lastly and all the time to long sermons. And I may say, just in passing, that my own personal sympathies are entirely with the laymen in their fundamental contention.

There is no reason in the nature of the case why a sermon should be just so long. Why should a sermon be just thirty minutes, or forty minutes, or if by reason of unusual powers of endurance and of attenuation, sixty minutes in length? There is no more reason that a man's sermon should be just so long, than there is that a man's trousers should be just so long. It all depends on the length of the man. In one case it depends upon the length of the man's legs, and in the other case it depends on the length of the man's mind.

The proper length of any sermon must be determined in the light of the reach and power of the man's mental grasp, in the light of his capacity to hold, to interest and to profit a body of hearers by his presentation of the truth. And you will all agree with me, I am sure, that there are men abroad in the land, who would make a much better appearance and would accomplish more good by their preaching, if they selected their trousers and determined the length of their sermons with a more accurate reference to their own particular sizes.

The sermon always is nothing more nor less than a tool! What size should a tool be? How long should a scythe be? How heavy should an axe be? This cannot be determined by certain fixed presuppositions or by any *a priori* principles about the formation of tools. It is to be determined altogether by the demands of the task to which this particular tool is to be applied. A man will mow more grass with a scythe of reasonable length than he would with a scythe twenty feet long. He will cut more wood with a five pound axe than he could with one weighing twenty pounds. The sermon also is a tool and its length is to be determined entirely by those considerations which indicate its fitness or its unfitness to accomplish a desired spiritual result.

We may therefore lay aside at the very start all our predilections in favor of a thirty or a forty minute sermon as having some divinely imposed sanction. There are no promises made in the Bible to the effect that people will be richly blessed and finally rewarded by being taken to heaven when they die, for having listened patiently to fifty-two unduly prolonged sermons in each of the years

of their earthly pilgrimage. The question of length is a practical question altogether and it is to be answered by the application of the pragmatic test. What length of sermon works best? What length of sermon accomplishes most in creating, nurturing and directing Christian impulse? If that can be determined, we shall have the proper length of discourse indicated. Whatever brand of philosophy you may prefer touching other vital interests, in determining the length of your sermon, you would better all be pragmatists. The length of sermon that works best in producing spiritual results is the right length.

With that general principle firmly in mind let me hasten to say that the clock has nothing to do with the length of a sermon. Nothing whatever! Clocks know nothing about the matter: clocks are in no wise competent to pass upon the proportions of a sermon. A long sermon is a sermon that seems long. It may have lasted an hour or it may have lasted but fifteen minutes. If it seems long, it is long—it is too long. And the short sermon is one that ends while people are still wishing for more. It may have lasted only twenty minutes or it may have lasted for an hour and a half. If it leaves the people wishing for more, they do not know nor care what the clock said about the length of it.

You cannot tell, therefore, how long a sermon is by watching the hands of a clock—watch the people. See where their hands are. If the hands of the men are for the most part in their vest pockets pulling out their watches to note again how long you have been at it, this is ominous. See where their eyes are! See where their minds are, then you will know exactly what time of day

it is for that particular sermon. It may be high time for it to come to an end.

If a man is unconscious, either because he is asleep or because he is already numb through the painful effort of listening: or if a man is unconscious because he is interested beyond measure, and lifted into such a sense of the immensities and the eternities of a higher experience as not to know whether he is in the body or out, he is entirely oblivious of clocks. A thousand minutes are to him as one, and one minute as a thousand. Time is no more. He has already entered into life eternal. He is actually living in a world unseen with no sense whatever of the lapse of what we call time. He may never have heard of the man named Einstein but he will have experienced to the full the truth contained in the doctrine of relativity.

There was that woman of Samaria! The day was hot and she was thirsty. She came forth to Jacob's well to get a pitcher of water. She found sitting by the well a mysterious stranger. The possibility of any sympathetic contact of his interests with hers seemed remote. He was a man, she was a woman—and in the Orient that means a gulf fixed. He was a Jew, she was a Samaritan—and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Race prejudice and religious bigotry had dug that gulf still deeper. He was the sinless Son of God and she was a woman morally bankrupt, living at that hour with a man who was not her husband. Her own wrong doing had widened that gulf into a chasm of separation.

The only thing they seemed to have in common was the fact that they were both thirsty. The Master began on that narrow bit of common ground. When he saw the

woman filling her water pot he said to her, "Give me a drink." And presently growing directly out of their conversation touching that simple interest of thirst, he was speaking to her of "living water" which would not leave whole sections of her nature still athirst. He was speaking of a worship which was not limited to "this mountain" nor to "Jerusalem," a worship universal in its scope because it was offered "in spirit and in truth." He was fixing her eyes not upon her sin, nor upon her sect, but upon her God. He was revealing to her One who could lift her out of her sins.

In this high exercise of faculty the woman forgot all about her thirst. She forgot the errand which had brought her out to Jacob's well. "She left her water pot," the record says, and went to the city entreating all she met to come and see One who had revealed her to herself. He had spoken to her as if he might have known all the things that ever she had done. And Jesus also forgot his hunger. When his disciples who had gone to the village to buy food returned and prayed him to eat, he said to them, "I am not hungry." And when they whispered among themselves, "Hath any man brought him aught to eat," He said to them, with a smile, "I have meat to eat, that ye know not of."

Here was that utter absorption in higher interests which causes men and women alike to forget the claims of the body as expressed in hunger and thirst! Here was an effective tribute to the power of great ideas! And when congregations are eating that meat which the thoughtless know not of, and drinking that "living water" which becomes a veritable well of satisfaction in each heart spring-

ing up with an everlasting life, all sense of time relations vanishes. The duration of any sermon is therefore to be indicated in terms of consciousness or of unconsciousness rather than by those figures which have to do with hours, and minutes, and seconds.

There are some things, however, which tend to make any sermon seem long. The long text may do it even before you have really begun. If the minister reads for his text three or four difficult, intricate verses from one of the minor prophets or even from the close knit letters of Paul, the people are apt to feel that they are in for a good deal even though the sermon in store for them may last only twenty minutes. The text should never be too long to be uttered easily in a single breath. We get better results always when we cut up the children's meat into conveniently sized mouthfuls.

One entire sentence of Scripture may be entirely too long for a useful text. The sentence which is really suitable for a text allows the voice to fall some time before it is ready to drop from sheer exhaustion. The second sentence in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, for example, contains by actual count two hundred and sixty-seven words. It is like one of those involved German sentences in which Mark Twain said a man could travel all day without changing cars. This one sentence from Ephesians with its two hundred and sixty-seven words has in it entirely too many words for a suitable text—about two hundred and fifty too many.

The length of many of the apostle's sentences indeed, as well as the intricacy of their construction, was one reason perhaps why Peter felt moved to say on one occa-

sion that "in the epistles of our beloved brother Paul there are some things hard to be understood." In our critical study of the Pauline epistles we have all had a fellow feeling with the frank outspoken Peter. If the apostle to the Gentiles had cultivated the habit of coming more readily to a full stop, allowing his voice to fall a bit sooner, he might not have suffered this adverse comment from the apostle to the circumcision. One clear, definite statement from Scripture, brief enough to be uttered readily and easy to remember when used as a text, gives the sermon a much more promising start.

It may be that less than an entire sentence, where the sense is not destroyed nor distorted, will furnish a most suggestive and helpful text for a sermon. Here are some good examples! "There is a lad here." "I was afraid and I went and hid." "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." "As much as in me is, I am ready." "Sell and give."

When you begin to read the verse the people will expect to hear the whole of it. Your action in taking but that part of it which suggests in vivid fashion some vital truth will at once arrest attention. Doctor John Henry Jowett has a most effective sermon on prayer from this text, "When ye pray, say, Our." The unwonted use of a portion of a most familiar verse of Scripture will aid you in promptly enlisting the interest of a congregation.

The same criticism holds against the long, intricate sentences sometimes perpetrated by the preachers themselves upon their people. If it is a full Sabbath day's journey from a man's nominative case to his leading verb, there are a great many tired, reluctant minds in any congrega-

tion which will decline to make the trip. The sentence which moves straight from start to finish like an arrow shot from the bowstring to the target, without being too long about it, is always the more effective.

The literary style of the Sermon on the Mount is limpid as a pool. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be. No man can serve two masters. Seek first the kingdom of God. Ask, and it shall be given you. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. By their fruits ye shall know them. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Monosyllables for the most part—in the sentences I have just quoted there are sixty-one words and all but six of them words of one syllable. Sentences brief and straight! The style as clear as the water of a running brook! The depth of those statements is fathomless but in their literary form they are clear as crystal. It was of the manner and the style of Christ's speech as well as of the substance, that men said and have been saying for two thousand years and will continue to say forever more, "He spake as never man spake." The long involved sentences will cause any man to stumble in his delivery thereby making his sermon less effective—cut them off and cast them from thee. It is better to enter into life maimed than having pious sentences as long as from Dan to Beersheba to fall into the pit of dullness.

A long introduction will make a sermon seem long. When one man is introduced to another, the two parties to the transaction desire to be made acquainted with their respective names. It may also be well for them to have some interesting fact regarding each man briefly sug-

gested. It helps them in starting their conversation to know something about each other. But they do not care to know all the past history in each case, or even so much of it as might be found in "Who's Who." When the brief necessary words of introduction have been uttered, then the two men can best shift for themselves.

It is so with all introductions—particularly with those which undertake to put a theme and a congregation on such pleasant and intimate terms with each other as to enable them at once to spend a profitable half hour together. Not in these words naturally, but after this manner introduce ye: Ladies and gentlemen, my theme! My theme, this is my congregation! Then allow them to enter at once upon that intimate and profitable contact for which the half hour is set apart. There is no better way of getting the attention of a congregation than by giving them as promptly as possible something worth attending to.

The man who cannot preach from the New Testament without beginning at the Babylonian Captivity in order to get a good running start, or from the Old Testament without giving a complete sketch of the history of the Jews from the days when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, needs to study more fully the nature of an introduction.

There are men who consume such an amount of time in putting on the tablecloth and distributing the knives and forks, that the people begin to wonder whether or not they are to have anything to eat. If the poor man only knew it, his hearers are all impatiently saying to him, "Get on, man, get on, and give us a chance at your subject!"

The lack of arrangement also tends to make any sermon seem long. There was once an uneducated Irishman who picked up a pocket dictionary and started in to read it through. He said afterward that the book seemed to be full of valuable information, but for the life of him, he could not get "the thread of the discourse." There are sermons which have a lot of good stuff in them, but the material is not arranged in any sort of order. The points do not come in logical fashion, 1, 2, 3, 4,—they come like the signals at a football game, 7, 2, 19, 23, 45, 11. The signals in the football game are purposely introduced in that confusing fashion so that they may *not* be understood by the players on the opposite side. The lack of order in the arrangement of sermon material works out a similar uncertainty and confusion in the minds of the people in the pews and to that extent it makes directly against the winning of the game by the minister who has not learned to count.

The dinner is always enjoyed the more, and, according to the best physiologists, it contributes more directly toward physical well-being, where the courses are arranged in some rational order. If we had the ice-cream served first, with the soup, the fish, the roast and the salad scattered about in any sort of hit-or-miss fashion as might happen, the dinner would be much less enjoyable and much less nourishing.

There is a strong prejudice in the minds of many people, and in the minds of some ill-advised ministers, against the use of a skeleton in the sermon. It is unfortunate if the appearance of the sermon is bony. And there are a great many sermons which would make a much better

appearance if they had eaten more meat before they entered the pulpit. But it ought to be remembered that while pink and white flesh is ever so much more beautiful to look at than the skeleton in the surgeon's closet, the pink and white flesh would be without either grace or utility if there were no bones hidden away somewhere within that graceful contour. And there are just as many bones in the lovely young woman, whose appearance is so entirely satisfactory, as there are in the skeleton hanging in the closet.

The bony appearance of the sermon is to be avoided, not by building it without any particular plan, but by clothing the outline with living tissue. It is written in the book of life that the mollusk can never do the work of the vertebrate. The mollusk sermon may have plenty of good soft thought in it, furnishing in abundance edible material which could be used in making a homiletic chowder. But if the sermon can neither "sit nor stand," to say nothing of being able to "rise and go," it will fail in its effectiveness.

The skeleton of the sermon need not be exposed overmuch. A house with the studding and the rafters and all the necessary framework on the outside would present a singular and an unfortunate appearance. That comely young woman with her full quota of two hundred and eight bones hidden away somewhere within her loveliness, would sacrifice a great deal if she undertook to wear her ribs on the outside of her clothing. The present styles of dress have done a good deal in that direction—they certainly leave much less to the unaided imagination than did the styles in vogue when I was a young man. And in that

measure they seem to some of us to have rendered much less attractive the more beautiful half of the human family. But, as Kipling would say, "that is another story." Returning to my less distracting and less perilous theme, the sermon which obtrudes its bones upon the public like some poor famine-stricken sufferer from India is likely to suggest to the congregation that it also has not had enough to eat before it was brought out for exhibition.

In the earlier days at Yale University there was a certain preacher who was strong on heads and subheads. He would have been a joy to Elspeth McFadyen, the famous sermon taster of Drumtochty. She could have followed him and have memorized his divisions without ever turning a hair. He would introduce Roman I, Roman II, Arabic 1, Arabic 2, One in brackets, two in brackets, and sometimes drawing it still finer, would bring in his A's and B's and C's. He would announce these minute subdivisions as definitely as if he had been giving a lesson in trigonometry.

There was also at that time a student in the Junior Class at Yale with a keen sense of humor who felt that the Lord had delivered this tiresome preacher into his hands. This Junior organized his class for a concerted movement. The next time this preacher appeared in Battell Chapel, the whole Junior Class was ready. And when he passed from Roman I to Arabic one, or from one in brackets to two in brackets, they all crossed their legs simultaneously in one direction; and when he passed another bony headline on the coast of his discourse, they uncrossed their legs and crossed them over the other way. This bit of exercise was very refreshing to their weary

spirits. And it soon became immensely diverting to the rest of the congregation. The Seniors across the aisle and the Freshmen and the visitors in the galleries withdrew their attention entirely from the unfortunate preacher to watch this mighty movement of three hundred pairs of legs as the preacher passed from point to point. He too presently became aware of what was taking place and the sight of so much flesh and blood in action was too much for even his dull spirit. He hastily closed his sermon and gave out the last hymn. It is not recorded what that hymn was—it might well have been,

"Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys,
Our souls can neither fly nor go,
To reach eternal joys."

The Junior was suspended for taking the leading part in that demonstration but I hope for the credit of Yale and for the credit of our own preaching profession that his punishment was not of long duration. If I had been Dean of the Divinity School at that time I should have been almost tempted to recommend him for an assistant professorship in the department of homiletics.

Have a solid backbone hidden away somewhere in your sermon so that it can stand up man-fashion and do its work. Organize your material around that spinal column, heads, arms, legs, fleshy parts, muscles to grip the people and nerves to respond to the movements of their own feelings, so that it may accomplish the desired end. You cannot afford to be one of those preachers who always

give the impression that having lost the trail, they are now going hither and yon on any chance impulse like silly sheep which have erred and strayed from the way. Have a definite plan but do not have it too much in evidence.

The well-built sermon is always easier to deliver because the points, following each other naturally and therefore inevitably, can be more readily remembered by the preacher himself. When I forget and leave out certain vital points in one of my sermons I always know that the sermon was not well built. If that particular idea had been needed just there in the construction of that sermon, I should not have forgotten it.

The well-built sermon will enlist the interest and attention of the people more completely. Even the untrained mind will feel the lack of something if the minister goes skipping about, liable to break out anywhere. The well-built sermon is also more easily remembered by the people, for the points can be held in the mind to the spiritual profit of the hearer. And the well-built sermon rounds itself out and stops at last by virtue of its own careful organization. The organic tree or animal by the very necessities of its own being comes to an end somewhere, while the inorganic may, like Tennyson's brook, go on forever. This is fearfully and wonderfully true of certain inorganic sermons as every patient churchgoer knows full well.

The sermon is made to seem unduly long by the man who dwells on the obvious. It may be necessary now and then for a public speaker to say that two and two make four. It is not necessary, however, to enlarge upon that statement and rub it in, or to illustrate it, or to exhort the

people to put their full, unhesitating trust in it. The moment such a truth is uttered, the people are saying, "We know that. We feel the full force of it. Now what comes of it? What bearing has it upon the problems of life as we face them? Proceed at once to what follows."

It may be appropriate now and then for a preacher to say that the sun rose yesterday morning in the east and on time as usual. This is a perfectly sound statement; it would be regarded as sound even at Princeton. But the people are only interested in knowing what comes of it. The fact itself is instantly apparent without further effort on the part of the man who makes the reference—now let him get down to business and make some worthy use of what is so entirely obvious.

Unless you are unfolding some old truth in a new way, or making a fresh application of some old truth to changed conditions, or by your vital interpretation of it, causing that old truth to live over again in the hearts of your people, you are in a fair way to bore your congregation. You will rob them of their time to no purpose when you needlessly dwell upon that which is undeniably old and familiar. The man who dwells even for three minutes on some perfectly obvious truth will cause the people to feel that he has been preaching to them for a full half hour.

The preacher who dawdles over his stories and illustrations leaves the impression of having preached a long sermon. The illustration is to be put out clear and straight so that all can see it and then left at once to the minds of the people. It is safe to trust something to their own mental capacity in the way of application. The suggestive illustration has ten times more force in it than

the one which has been chewed to rags. The homiletic pabulum which has been Fletcherized and predigested before it is turned over to the people for their sustenance is never really appetizing. The perennial charm which attaches to the parables of Christ is due in considerable measure to the fact that they suggest so much more than is directly declared. There are people who always mean exactly what they say. Our Lord meant a great deal more than he actually said in so many words.

Into one of our Connecticut pulpits there came one summer a visiting minister who used for an illustration the pathos which attaches to an unoccupied house in the country located on an abandoned farm. It would have served his purpose fairly well, had he introduced it in a touch-and-go manner. But he dwelt on it. He described every broken window pane and every rod of fence. He gave us full details regarding every patch of weeds and every old stump on that abandoned farm. He used it until he had used it up. And then ever and anon he would return to it for some additional reference. He kept that "abandoned farm" before that suffering congregation until any man present would have bought it from him at any price the minister might have chosen to name, simply to get it out of his hands. The people are wearied and the force of an illustration is altogether destroyed by the habit of dawdling over the insignificant details. In speaking to the people as well as in speaking to the Lord "use not vain repetitions" as the heathen do.

The steady monotone, sometimes known among the ungodly as the "preaching tone," will make any sermon seem long. The droning of a sawmill at a distance, or the

steady rumble of some easy going railroad train will oftentimes lull a wide-awake man to sleep. The monotonous droning of a preacher's delivery in a similar way may take away all desire to listen or even to stay awake. If such ministers would open a sanitarium for insomnia, the only other equipment they would need would be beds—their own homiletic efforts would provide all the necessary treatment.

The man who is *uniformly* earnest, *uniformly* tender, *uniformly* emphatic; the man who is striving to say something appealing and helpful with every breath he draws, becomes wearisome. If he would only drop now and then into some colloquialism for a moment or rise occasionally to something impassioned, it would aid him greatly in holding the attention of his people.

The conversational method wears better than any other, because it has in it more of the element of variety, and because it also strikes more effectually the human note. And when everything is said and done, preaching is talking—it is talking on a serious subject to serious-minded people for serious ends. But at its best it is talking rather than oratory. How much is suggested where we read, "He opened his mouth and taught them." The naturalness and the inevitableness of what he said, springing as it did directly out of what he was, are there suggested in that effective comment. He simply opened his mouth—and out it came in the most natural way in the world.

The conclusions of sermons which are a long time in concluding tend to make these sermons seem long. The minister who is accustomed to say, "Now one thing more" would better not make it sixteen more. If he says, "Now,

in conclusion," let him conclude promptly. He ought to keep faith with the people when once he awakens a joyful expectation of that sort in their minds. It is never wise to trifle with the feelings of a congregation on anything so sacred and vital as the conclusion of a sermon. You have all heard sermons which dragged along and seemed to indicate that the preacher did not know on what street the grand terminal was to be found. When the patience of the genial "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" was once being thus tried at a tiresome service he whispered to his companion, "Do you suppose by any chance he has entirely forgotten the conclusion of his sermon?"

Furthermore, the moment a preacher begins to throw in those encouraging asides "Just one thing more" or "Now in conclusion" he makes many of his hearers uneasy. They feel as if they ought to be getting their rubbers on in place of listening with undivided attention to what may be the most vital portion of the man's sermon.

It is possible to bring people into a fine mood of Christian aspiration and of high resolve, and then by useless reiteration and wearisome exhortation to get them out of that mood again, so that some of them will go away almost sorry that they came to church. "Exhorting" and "exhausting" not only sound alike—in the effect produced upon many a congregation the two processes there indicated are very much alike. Remember always that you are preaching for the sake of the people. You are not preaching to fill up a given amount of time, or to get a certain number of ideas off of your mind. And when the sermon has really accomplished its high end in making

a definite spiritual impression, it had better stop before that result is marred.

In my own practice, while I never use a manuscript in preaching, there are five sentences in my sermon which I always write out in advance and know by heart—the first one and the last four. I like to begin, if I can, with a sentence as good as I know how to make it, so that the first ball may be pitched, if possible, right over the plate and at the proper level. And I want to have the last four sentences definitely in mind so that I may not be left circling around in the air, like some helpless crow, flying to and fro above a rail fence where the stakes have all been sharpened, seeking in vain for a suitable place to light.

When the minister has gotten his case all in, strong and clear as he can make it, then let him utter a few swift sentences to send it home and lodge it permanently in the minds and hearts of the people, and then cease. If he leaves them wishing that he had gone on for five or ten minutes more, it will not do any harm. If they are still a bit hungry, they will be more apt to come back for further spiritual rations on the following Sunday.

It is a good rule in physical hygiene to leave the table while one could still eat a little more if he were urged. It makes for good digestion and for the continuance of that healthy appetite which brings us back to the table again and again each time with an eager relish for whatever may be there in store for us. You can apply the same principle to preaching. If your people are allowed to leave their pews some little time before they are completely surfeited by the undeniably good things you are urging upon them, they will be more ready to come back

when the bell rings and another feast is spread for them in the house of the Lord. In preaching as in prayer men are not heard for their much speaking.

Now having indicated some things which are calculated to make the sermon seem long, let me also indicate certain qualities which make the sermon seem short. The first one is to be found in not making the sermon too long when it is prepared. I believe in preparing a sermon which is an hour in length as to its real content and then condensing it so that it can be preached in twenty-five or thirty minutes. This can be done to the profit of all your hearers.

In your unregenerate fishing days, before you learned to fish properly with a fly, you may have resorted to bait. You will remember how those long, squirming angleworms could vary their length. One of them might easily extend himself until he would measure six inches, and then suddenly at the prick of the sharp hook, he could cuddle himself together until he was not more than two inches long. But there was no more worm in the elongated edition than there was in the worm of briefer compass. If the mother bird had been feeding her young, the nest full of birdlings would have derived just as much proteid from the condensed edition. And when we have learned the high art of condensation so that an hour of talk may be compacted into twenty-five minutes, without the loss of a single idea, the people will derive as much, and even more, spiritual proteid from our efforts as a result of the condensation.

The high art of saying things without using up too much of the English language in the process is one to be cultivated. It is well for the minister to study the art

of packing his sentences with meaning. Try it on! You will be amazed at the results you can achieve. Write a whole page and then condense the entire meaning of it into a single paragraph. Then by a further condensation bring it within the compass of three sentences. You will find that it can be done without loss.

The man who packs a Saratoga trunk for a trip to Europe may be constrained by circumstances to select the really necessary things and put them into a small steamer trunk. He may then even be compelled by a further call for the condensation of his luggage to bring the needful articles into such compass that they can be carried in a suitcase. He will commonly find that as a result of this compression he still has all that he really needs for the trip and his joy will be much heightened by this reduction in the amount of baggage to be carried about. Hear then the parable of traveling in marching order! Apply the content of it to the work of outfitting your sermons for their weekly trip into the minds of a congregation.

I am not here pleading for the use of epigrams. The smart, snappy, self-conscious epigram very frequently sacrifices truth for the sake of a phrase. Many epigrams indeed earn their living by that sort of self-sacrifice. The congregation doomed to live on the smart, snappy, and half-impudent Elbert Hubbard type of sentence is in for a sorry time. It may be well to have the mustard pot and the pepper box on the table, but to attempt to make them serve in lieu of roast beef and good bread would be ruinous to digestion and it would result in starvation.

But the minister can use short words rather than long Greek and Latin derivatives. The intricate and extended

philosophical and theological words, which would not go into a suitcase without being folded twice, may be replaced by shorter and more expressive terms. When you count the monosyllables in the finest passages of Shakespeare, or in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, or in the King James version of the Bible, you find how a simple, terse, expressive style can be built up by the use of short words.

It was Charles Kingsley who advocated the plan of putting a tax on long words. "A light tax on words of over three syllables which are necessary evils like rats, but which like them must be kept down judiciously: a heavy tax on words of over four syllables, heterodoxy, spontaneity, spuriosity and the like; and on words of over five syllables a totally prohibitory tax."

You are to speak "to every man in the tongue in which he was born." Now no man was ever "born" in the professional patois of the theological school or the philosophical club. The Lord who is merciful and gracious would not allow it—he would not permit any innocent child to start off with such a cruel handicap. It is a habit and a bad habit at that. It is an acquired taste and in the presence of an untrained public a vicious taste. It may be well enough to speak that language when we are addressing those who thoroughly understand it but not otherwise. If you would interest and influence everyday people you must speak to them habitually in the language of everyday life.

We find this literary habit running all through Shakespeare. It is significant that the two most familiar and most noble monuments of literary expression in our English language, the King James Version of the Bible and

Shakespeare's Plays, were put forth at almost the same time and they both show the same high quality of English. The King James Version of the Bible was published in 1611. Shakespeare retired from the theater in that same year and died in 1616. Hear this speech of Mark Antony at the funeral of Julius Cæsar!

"I am no orator as Brutus is:
But as you know me all, a plain, blunt man
That loves my friend; and that they know full well
That gave me public leave to speak of him:
For I have neither wit nor words nor worth."

There are forty-five words in that passage, forty-one of them monosyllables—only three words in that entire passage aside from the proper name "Brutus" have more than a single syllable.

Or these great words so familiar to us all!

"Who steals my purse, steals trash;
'Tis something, nothing. 'Twas mine, 'tis his,
And has been slave to thousands,
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed."

Here again are forty-one words, all but five of them monosyllables! The minister who would cause words to go home to men's hearts like rifle shots should read Shakespeare and the King James Version until they have furnished him, as it were, the natural method of his daily speech.

The same principle holds regarding short sentences. The sentence should go straight to the mark without loitering. The sentence that hesitates is lost, if it be found in the steep places of a sermon. The sentence should be so full of life as to bleed if one were to cut into it anywhere. Those sentences which sprawl and are covered all over with out-reaching tentacles will never have the efficiency belonging to those sentences which are straight and true with genuine vitality in every inch of them. The sentences which are propped up all along with qualifying clauses and modifying statements, as if the main truth were quite unable to stand alone, confuse the audience and retard the speaker. By the use of short words and short sentences a vast amount of thought may be successfully brought into brief compass.

There are special occasions when it may be appropriate for a man to preach for an hour. You may be dealing with some great doctrine or with some other mighty theme, when you will need forty-five or fifty or even sixty minutes really to open it up from shore to shore. But on all ordinary occasions the sermon of twenty-five or thirty minutes will accomplish vastly more good than the one which is drawn out to an hour. We are living in the day of the short story, the quick lunch, the sharp ring at the telephone, the swift flight of the automobile. It is the day of short things and the man who would address and serve his generation aright must steadily take into account the prevailing moods.

It is well for the preacher to have a clock or a watch (to do justice finally to these useful time-keepers) where

he can see it during the delivery of his sermon. While the clock does not determine the real length of the sermon but only its apparent length, it is well for the speaker to train himself in good habits. Even though he may be lifting his people into the third heaven by the power of his spiritual appeal, so that they do not know whether they are in the body or out of the body, it is well for him to know how long they have been up there on that high level of feeling. It will be necessary for them to come down presently so as not to be late for the Sunday dinner. The minister therefore had better know what time of day it is, even when he is mounting up with wings like an eagle.

Furthermore, human nature constructed as it is can only stand such rapturous exaltation for comparatively brief periods. It is wise therefore for the minister, however gifted he may be in causing congregations to ascend to those higher levels of spiritual feeling, to understand to what length his sermon has already extended. He must be ready at the proper time to bring the people back to their accustomed level where with renewed strength they can walk in the way of duty and not faint.

If a man speaks habitually with a clock or a watch where he can see it, he may also be trained perhaps to become a bit more conscientious, than many ministers seem to be, toward the other speakers who are to follow them on some extended program. There are ministers in every religious convention who will speak twenty minutes when they have been asked to speak ten: they will take forty minutes if twenty has been the assignment.

I hope those brethren may go to Heaven when they die! I have faith to believe that some of them will. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, even such exasperating sinners as they have been. But I have a feeling that all such men should be compelled to learn the Westminster Catechism by heart and that they should be compelled to remain for two or three hundred years in some sort of purgatory where they would have to recite that Catechism from end to end three times a day before meals, and then be forced to spend the rest of their waking hours in hearing one another talk. By the godly sorrow thus induced in them, they might at last be brought into a better frame of mind and be admitted to the society of the blessed.

But watch the people as well as the clock. The hands on the clock may not point to the time when you ought to stop, but if the eyes and the minds of the people indicate that the sermon might appropriately end just there, end it. The Apostle Paul himself sometimes preached too long. He certainly preached too long on a certain night of which we have record. "There was a young man," the Scripture says—"a young man" rather than one of those dear old saints who having already heard enough of preaching to see them safely through, might be pardoned for dozing off—"there was a young man named Eutychus," who went to sleep and fell out of the window and all but broke his neck while Paul was preaching. These things were written, brethren, for our warning!

On all ordinary occasions a period of twenty-five or thirty minutes is ample for any sermon. If you have not struck oil by that time, the chances are that you are

boring—I use this term advisedly and in its full strength —the chances are that you are boring in the wrong place. If you have struck a good flow of oil, the vessels of your people will be full at the expiration of that period. And when they are full, they are full. You could not do anything more for them if you held on in the same effective way for another half hour. You can therefore close your sermon with a clear conscience as one who has delivered his soul and has profited his people.

The sermon seems shorter where the minister does not stop to prove everything, nor to explain everything. Jesus never stopped to prove anything. He spoke about God, and about duty, about prayer, and about redemption, about the kingdom of heaven and the future life, as great valid certainties. He was so sure of them that he made others sure of them. He did not argue; he proclaimed.

It may be appropriate on occasion to show that our claims are grounded in moral reason and that they will stand all the tests applied to them by rigorous, intellectual scrutiny. But in the main, it is much better to assume the great fundamental verities and set them forth with power. Let those great truths out and they will take care of themselves! They will prove their own validity by certifying themselves in an enlarged and ennobled spiritual experience on the part of those who receive them.

You can learn to preach a great deal in a short time. The people will feel the length and the breadth, the height and the depth of some august truth as you put it forth, even though you may not bring out in detail all of its rich and varied content. The sense of limitless spiritual value is there in that segment of truth which you concisely pro-

claim even though you are leaving a very great deal to the spiritual imagination.

I have preached, as no doubt every minister has, when I did not seem to get my proper connections made, either perpendicularly or horizontally. I toiled in rowing and the wind was contrary. I did not get anywhere even though I persevered entirely too long for the comfort of the patient listeners. My head felt like Noah's Ark. It was made of gopher wood. It was covered with pitch without and within, rendering it impervious to all new ideas or to any sort of inspiration from on high or from the waiting congregation. I could feel crawling around within it all manner of four-footed notions and creeping things. But I could not set them in any kind of marching order, to say nothing of causing them to fly in the open heavens. And I went home that day with a feeling that after all I would better have followed my noble father's example and have become an honest and useful farmer.

There have been other days, however, when I did get my connections made, horizontally and perpendicularly. The word of the Lord had free course. It ran and was glorified. It came from Him, through me, to the people. And on those days I felt like the Ark of the Covenant. There was nothing in me save the two Tables of the Law which Moses put there, and the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. I was deeply conscious of the fact that I was actually giving to those hungry souls of my own best and the best of that which had been given me from above. And on those days I went home with a deep, sweet sense of gratitude to God that He had made me a preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

V

THE LIGHTER ELEMENTS OF THE SERMON

IT is a sound principle in the science of nutrition that life is best sustained where it is not fed upon undiluted proteid. Baked beans and brown bread are nourishing as practical New England knows full well. But it is possible to have the food supply in such concentrated form as to defeat its own ends. Bulk for bulk, there are a great many more calories in broiled bacon, fried eggs, baked potatoes and corn muffins, than are to be found in like quantities of spinach and celery, of turnips and lettuce, of tomatoes or bran. But the coarser and less nourishing foods have their normal and useful place in the high task of nourishing life. They not only serve the purpose of eliminating waste; they also aid in the process of assimilating and absorbing the food values in the richer forms of sustenance.

In like manner the sermon may well contain elements other than those which belong to pure religious instruction. "The sincere milk of the word" and that solid, satisfying "meat which comes down from above" to give life to the world, will be more readily assimilated by the children of the Kingdom if other less nutritious elements are placed alongside of them on the table of shewbread. Man shall not live by sound doctrine alone, even though the truth contained therein may be incontrovertible and the statement of it clear and accurate beyond all peradventure.

There are certain lighter substances which have a rightful place in the sermon. They serve to gain attention, to relieve the strain of steady listening to the presentation of abstract truth, and they contribute mightily to the sense of help which the hearers will bear away from a well-proportioned message.

In this lecture I desire to speak of three of these lighter elements, illustration, humor and those aspects of truth which are best brought out by the use of the imagination.

The word *illustrate* means literally to throw light or luster upon anything. The illustration is never to be regarded as an end in itself; it shines for the sake of something beyond. When the lighted candle is held up to the painting, it is not intended that the beholders should look at the candle but at the painting upon which the candle throws its light. When the speaker has uttered some weighty truth, some valid argument, some fundamental principle of life, he may well pick up an illustration to shed further light upon that which he would have the people see. "Arguments are the pillars of a discourse, illustrations are the windows which let in the light."

The illustration is a concrete picture as distinguished from the dry, abstract statement of truth. Now all children love pictures—they must have them. The people in our congregations for the most part are only grown-up children. The phenomenal popularity of the "movies" testifies to the wide-spread demand for pictures. The larger circulation of magazines which are profusely illustrated as compared with the more sober reviews like the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American,* emphasizes this same preference.

The Master knew what was in man and how his need could best be met. He therefore "spake many things unto them in parables"—that is to say, in pictures. In the Sermon on the Mount, brief though it is, there are no less than fifty-six metaphors, which are really word pictures. Salt, light, candle, bushel, treasure, moth, rust, lilies, ravens, splinter, beam, bread, fish, scorpion—these are samples. Fifty-six of them! The entire Sermon on the Mount can be read aloud in fifteen minutes. These fifty-six metaphors mean therefore that in this particular utterance word pictures came from His lips at the rate of more than three per minute.

His parables have gone out throughout the world and the meaning of them unto the ends of the earth. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. And the picturesque quality of His teaching as well as the glorious content of it has helped to gain for it this wider currency and to increase immeasurably its power of appeal.

He likened the methods and the manifestations of the kingdom of heaven to that which is found in yeast, in the varieties of soil, in the varying fate of the seed, in the work of the pearl-fisher, in the struggle of the wheat and the tares in a single field, in the brooding attitude of the hen who would gather her chickens under her wings, in the action of the woman sweeping her house to find a coin which was lost, in the search of the shepherd for the lost sheep, in the behavior of wellbred and illbred guests at a wedding and in many another well drawn picture which served as a symbol of religious truth. There are thirty-odd full-fledged parables in the teachings of Christ.

He was an oriental himself and he was addressing the oriental mind. His mode of speech, however, has so commended itself to men and women of all nations and peoples, of all kindreds and tongues, that we may fittingly follow his method in the generous use of illustration. His customary method will be found to have great pedagogical value in every country where the sun shines.

Where the illustration is fittingly chosen and clearly phrased, it accomplishes these four results. First it serves to make one's meaning more clear. We are addressing Sunday after Sunday a great many people who do very little hard reading. They are not accustomed to think in abstract terms. They need to see the truth with their eyes as well as to hear it with their ears. The untrained mind will follow you somewhat laboriously through a carefully reasoned argument. It may possibly begin to fear lest it has lost the trail, but a well-selected illustration will enable it to come at once out into the open where it will see the full meaning of all that went before. "I see it," the man says to himself as this fresh light falls upon your presentation which so long as it was left in abstract statements, had been somewhat baffling.

The illustration will help your people to remember the truth you have taught. It is hard to fix an abstract idea in the mind of a man whose main concern is with things that are seen. The picture sticks. The people who sit in our pews live mainly in the concrete. When these truths are by skillful illustration related to the plain, hard facts with which they are accustomed to deal in home life and in farm life, in industry and in commerce, the meaning abides with them.

I may indicate the tendency of the mind to hold effectively the illustration, even where the logical argument which preceded it may have slipped away, by an experience of my own. I listened many years ago to an Easter sermon by one of the leading preachers of America. I had completely forgotten his text and the main points in the development of his theme until they were recalled to my mind recently when I found the sermon in a published volume. There was, however, a single illustration used by him that morning which had remained with me during all the intervening years. Whenever I had recalled the features of that illustration (as I had done many times) I felt again the full power of his Easter message. Here is the splendid picture which he painted that day before our eyes!

"We make too much of death. We do not dwell enough on the soul and its ongoing might. As one sails the beautiful Mediterranean, round whose shores so much that is greatest in human history took place, whose winds and waves bear in them sacred and glorious memories, whose coast-lines and the mountain ranges behind them represent so many of the splendid years of our race, one shrinks from leaving it. Then, too, the sea itself contracts toward the west, the shores draw together, and there in the way of the ongoing mariner are the straits so narrow, so apparently impassable, so like the end.

"But as one advances, the illusion vanishes. The straits are narrow and yet they are wide enough for the mightiest ship; the straits are narrow and full of gloom, but they are not the end. On past the great rock at the entrance, on through the six-and-thirty miles of contracted life, on-

ward in solemn haste and high confidence, your ship goes and out into a greater sea, the glow of light and lines of fire on the whole distant horizon are the call of love from afar and the tender welcome home.

"Such is our life on this sea of time. Its winds and waves, its tides and shores are rich in the treasures of human love. Who does not love this sea set in the framework of the worthiest and happiest that man has done, that man may know? Who does not rejoice in it at its widest and greatest? Who does not watch with pain the inevitable lessening? Who, as the years come and go, does not become conscious of a shrinkage of being, and that there in his path is death, narrow, wild, the abode of utter gloom? Is it not the end, and in it shall we not lose forever this enchanting human world?

"Not so. In that narrow passage there is room enough for the greatest soul to go. Let it go in solemn confidence and serene hope! Beyond is the infinite, and out into that infinite the soul shall sail to see again the abiding values and splendors of the heart, to note on the tides that draw it onward the welcome of the eternal love and the gracious light that cannot fail."

The well drawn picture sends the truth home and causes it to stick like a burr in the moral natures of those who felt the full force of the ideas it contained. How effective was Nathan the prophet when he went to rebuke the king for his frightful sin against the honest, heroic Uriah! He drew that picture of the meanness of a rich man who spared his own flock but stole the one ewe lamb of a poor peasant that he might place a toothsome roast before his guest. The guilty king flamed with anger against the

cold-blooded cruelty of such an action. Then the prophet with his rapier thrust lodged his rebuke where it would be felt and remembered. "Thou art the man." I wonder if the shepherd king ever looked again upon the meager flock of some poor man without feeling afresh the sting of remorse. "Seeing is believing" we say; and certainly seeing is feeling.

The illustration is also capable of varied and continued application. It is elastic in its meaning. A statement from the multiplication table leaves nothing to the imagination. When we say that "two times two are four," the returns are all in. When we read a parable of the Master, it yields at once a certain meaning. But this by no means exhausts its possibilities. The parable will be read and re-read by succeeding generations. It will receive fresh and vital interpretation and application under conditions radically changed. This bestows upon it a kind of immortality of influence. The very fact that it is an illustration, suggesting more than it defines, will give it an abiding opportunity for usefulness in thus ministering to the spiritual life of all those to whose minds it may come.

The illustration also serves to indicate how a certain unity of purpose and of method runs through all things. The parables of our Lord were more than felicitous pictures. They declared the fact that to him all life was full of spiritual suggestion. The whole universe visible and invisible was woven by a single hand. God the Father Almighty was Maker of heaven and of earth. The illustration portraying things visible which are temporal but suggesting the invisible values which are lasting, proclaims

this unity which extends through all created things. Use illustrations therefore freely and aright—it will help your people to feel that the whole world is alive with God. There was sound philosophy as well as good poetry in what Milton said,

> "What if earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought."

How can we best employ the illustration? It is wise not to overwork it. There ought to be in all of our preaching more reading matter than pictures—a great deal more. It is never necessary to illustrate the obvious. When a truth has been clearly stated and can be clearly seen at a glance, the people are impatient if we begin to draw further diagrams of it. Get on with your sermon if your meaning at a given point has already been thoroughly apprehended.

It is foolish to use repeated illustrations of the same truth. When a man says, "As sure as the sun will rise, as sure as the tides will ebb and flow, as sure as spring will follow winter," and so on for a series of six or seven similar illustrations of inevitable sequence, the minds of the people rebel. One such illustration will suffice. If the thing is as sure as sunrise, that is sure enough,—we can take the rest of the guarantees for granted.

It is foolish to introduce an illustration just for the sake of its beauty, its novelty, or its cleverness. There are preachers who, once possessed of an interesting story or a clever illustration, become impatient to use it. They

can hardly wait for Sunday to come. They will employ that illustration in the next sermon preached even though it has to be dragged in by the hair of its head. They had best salt it down in their notebooks until it is needed and can be used in some connection where it will be entirely apt.

The illustration cannot be allowed to usurp the place of serious thought. Stories are easy to get, easy to remember, and easy to tell. There are even ready made "Cyclopedias of Illustration" where one will find cut and dried illustrations for every conceivable truth in the universe. You can find there in alphabetical order illustrations taken from the lives of all the men of the Bible from Adam to Zebedee and applicable to all the truths under heaven from avarice to the zone system in transportation. These books are a delusion and a snare. If any young man has been foolish enough to purchase one, he had best burn it forthwith. The steady use of such "first aids to the lazy" will weaken and impoverish the mind.

The public speaker had best not dawdle over his illustration. Let him study the impressionist school of painting! The impressionist paints a picture where there are trees, with birds sitting upon the branches, and cows in the field beyond. The painter paints real trees, real birds, and real cows. He does not, however, paint in all the leaves on the trees nor all the feathers on the birds, nor all the hairs on the back of the cow. When one looks at his picture near at hand he sees nothing of all this. There is a clear and distinct impression of all these forms of life, but not of all the insignificant details. Strike out your illustration in a free, bold way, so that without dally-

ing over the minutiæ the people will instantly see your meaning.

The illustration should fit—the closer the better. It may be impossible to have the analogy go on all fours, but it should get at least three legs firmly on the ground. If the illustration is false or misleading; if it is far-fetched so that the connection is not readily recognized; if it brings up any unworthy associations, then it may well be cast out.

It is wise to leave the illustration while it still suggests something more than has been actually brought out. Vagueness hath its virtues no less than clearness. Almost any woman adds something to her beauty by wearing a veil. The veil must not be too thick—if she wore a blanket before her face her beauty would be entirely obscured. When you offer an audience a picture do not insist upon furnishing them an itemized statement of all that it contains—let them use their own eyes a bit. When you offer them an illustration, leave it with them while there is still some juice left in it which you have not pressed out.

Where shall we get our illustrations? Anywhere! Everywhere! In heaven above and on the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth! Get all you can out of the Bible. There is value in illustrating New Testament truths by Old Testament incidents. It is effective to illustrate the Heavenly Father's yearning love over his sinful children by the heartbreak of David the King over the death of Absalom, the handsome but dissolute young prince. The Bible is the greatest picturebook in print. The preacher may well "search the Scriptures" for illus-

trations as well as for the promises of eternal life. He will never exhaust their rich content and the illustrations from that source will have all the more value because of the sacred associations which cluster around them.

Watch for useful illustrations in your general reading. History and biography are the best of sources. "Lives of all great men remind us" of situations which furnish us all manner of good illustrations. The poets who dream for us are forever offering us moving pictures of spiritual truth. The great novelists, Dickens and Thackeray, Anthony Trollope and George Eliot are replete with useful material for illustration.

Watch for illustrations where your Master did! When he saw a woman putting leaven in the meal, or farmers sowing their seed in all sorts of soil, or fishermen drawing in their nets containing all manner of fish, or shepherds moving out upon the mountains to recover the strays, or a father breaking his heart over a wayward son in some far country, he recognized everywhere the presence of energies and activities which had their counterparts in the life of his kingdom. Country life and city life, the streets and the shops, the stores and the mills, the playgrounds of the children and the recreations of the more mature, are all full of suggestive pictures of moral truth.

You will watch for illustrations in current literature. The popular stories as well as the more serious articles in the magazines will furnish you an abundance of material for the illustration of your truth. If you use occasionally illustrations from the magazines or from stories which your hearers have already been reading, the natural interest to be found in such material will be increased.

The people will feel a certain joy that you too have been traversing the very fields where their minds have walked.

You can afford to range widely in making your choices. The man of good judgment will avoid seeking all of his illustrations from one or two fields of human interest. If he cultivates a single patch of ground in his quest for similes his people may soon come to feel that all the potatoes in that field have already been dug. He is making his appeal to all sorts and conditions of men. He must therefore consult their varying interests in order to give every man his meat in due season and in the form most appealing to his habit of mind.

How effective was the Master's illustration when he was pointing out the folly of attaching one's supreme interest to perishable things! "Take heed and beware of covetousness" he said to a pair of brothers who had fallen out over the division of an inheritance. "Take heed—a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Then he drew a picture of that man whose major interest lay in building big barns and in filling them with things; and then in building still bigger barns and in filling them with things. When this man had gotten his barns all up and had filled them to the eaves with things enough to last him for a thousand years he said: "Soul, take thine ease. Thou hast goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink and be merry." He was talking to his stomach under the impression that he was addressing his soul! The soul does not live on things which can be stored up in barns or in banks. Then God said to him: "Thou fool! This night shall thy soul be required of thee! Then whose shall those things be!"

"So is every one," the Master added dryly, "who layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." How clear-cut it all is and how telling as an illustration of the utter futility of the whole philosophy of materialism as a program of life!

The second of the lighter elements in the sermon which I would discuss is that of humor. There are many serious-minded men who might insist that humor has no rightful place whatever in the work of preaching. We would all agree that the clerical jester in the pulpit is out of place. The man who makes puns on Scripture or cracks jokes about sacred things, disgraces his calling and coarsens the taste of the people to whom he speaks. We do not want clowns in the pulpit. The clown in the circus with his pointed cap and spotted clothes may easily be a means of grace affording amusement, relief and relaxation from the strain of living ever in the somber mood. We do not care, however, to see the clown in the pulpit, with a pointed nose and a spotted tongue.

But God saw fit to make men with the capacity for laughter as well as for worship. We can smile upon occasion as easily as we can pray upon other occasions. God has given us all of these faculties, the talent for logical argument, the power of cogent statement, the ability to give fresh interpretation to old truths, the taste for fine literary form, the sympathetic quality of voice, the capacity for moral indignation, to be used in making the truth effective. He has also given to all men, who are not sadly defective, that saving sense of humor which employed with reverence and with taste may add immeasurably to ministerial success. The man who cannot look into a

mirror occasionally and laugh heartily at that which he sees reflected there, must be listed with the "defectives."

The humor must naturally be used sparingly, ever so sparingly, but where it is used with discretion and in proper proportions it serves to enlist and to hold attention where the interest of the people has begun to lag. It calls them back to think again with more avidity upon the serious ideas which are being presented.

The employment of delicate humor occasionally will rest and refresh an audience. The smile which plays across a congregation of people enables their minds to unbend from the strain of serious and sustained mental effort. They come back to the more vital interests with strength renewed.

The employment of humor will also serve to impress upon the mind some great principle by an unexpected turn or by some statement of a familiar idea which has in it an element of surprise. Where all men say the same thing in exactly the same way it is almost as though no one had said anything. Where the truth is clothed at times in unusual forms and with a touch of humor, the meaning stands revealed the more clearly, and it will be more readily retained by the average mind.

We have abundant scriptural warrant for the employment of humor. The Bible is not a joke book—it was written for the most part by serious-minded men and with a serious purpose. But it is not by any means uniformly somber—there is an abundance of delicate humor within its pages. The story of the crafty men of Gideon who imposed upon the Israelites with their array of old clothes

and moldy bread; the parable of Jotham regarding the trees in making their choice of a king, putting the crown upon a worthless bramble because of the unwillingness of the more respectable members of society, the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine, to hold public office; the consternation of the rude Philistines when they had captured the Ark of the Covenant, and were led to feel as if they had actually captured Yahweh himself to their undoing—all these familiar narratives with their fine vein of humor were undoubtedly meant to be taken as expressive of the sense of fun, as well as the embodiment of wholesome lessons.

The story of Samson found its place on the pages of Holy Writ mainly perhaps because of the humor it contains. Samson was a great joker. He carried off the gates of a city as a kind of Hallowe'en prank! He burned up the wheat fields of the Philistines by setting loose in them foxes with fire-brands tied to their tails in order to get the laugh on his enemies. He joked with and deceived his wife whose clumsy Philistine mind was unequal to his own more nimble wits! When he propounded his riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness," making a wager with the Philistines that they could not guess it, we read that the answer was finally wheedled out of him by his Philistine wife. She then promptly gave it to her own people. When they brought the correct answer to Samson, thus winning the wager, he replied rather coarsely, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not guessed my riddle." This is all rather low grade ore from the mine of humor, but it indicates the feeling of those earlier men touching

the place of this element in the work of religious instruction.

The story of Elijah mocking the priests of Baal is full of a grim and bitter humor. "Cry louder," he said, there on the slopes of Carmel when the trial of the rival faiths was being made. "Cry louder!" They were already yelling at the top of their lungs and they had been yelling from morning until midday. "He is a god," the prophet added in sarcastic vein, "but either he is talking, or he has gone out hunting, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he is asleep, and must be wakened up." This is all meant to be pitiless irony. Elijah knew perfectly well there was no such god as Baal, that there was none to hear nor to answer. He was turning the laugh in contemptuous fashion upon the futile efforts of a false faith.

When we come to the Gospels, we find that Jesus employed humor in a delicate but most effective way. He was once reproached by the Pharisees because he and his disciples ate with publicans and sinners. Hear his reply! "I am not come to call the righteous," he said, "but sinners to repentance." "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It was a delicious bit of irony. He enjoyed the making of this reference to those narrow-minded, uncharitable Pharisees who were anything but "whole." He held them up to ridicule by speaking of them as "righteous" when they were all "sinners" in sore need of "repentance." The very men who were criticizing him for mingling with the morally needy were the ones who had the greatest need of "the physician" for their own recovery.

How delicious is the humor in that familiar parable of

the Pharisee and the Publican! "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, unjust, extortioners, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'" His prayer was indeed wholly "with himself." The entire transaction was carried on within the limits of his own little soul. The prayer never rose even to the ceiling—it went no higher than the top of his own swollen head. What art there was in picturing his moral complacency touching his superiority to "extortioners and adulterers!" Thank God, I am not as other men are! What other men? Extortioners, adulterers—the lowest, vilest men who could be named! It must have been gratifying for this conceited prig to feel that in the spiritual race set before us he had not been entirely eclipsed by such rascals! How effective is this whole picture in "taking off" the self-righteousness of those who in supercilious fashion entirely overlook their own faults!

We shall not understand the reply of Jesus to that Syrophenician woman unless we have in mind His sense of humor. When the woman appealed to the Master to heal her child, He answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." His words sound almost brutal if we take them merely at their face value. But when we picture His face with a smile upon it as He used the ordinary term applied by contemptuous Jews to those of foreign birth, indicating His own disagreement with their habit of mind, His meaning is instantly apparent. The woman saw and understood. She answered at once, "Yea, Lord: yet the lap dogs do eat the crumbs

which fall from their master's table." Jesus recognizing the fact that she had understood and that her faith overtopped all racial and sectarian barriers, pronounced upon her His gracious benediction, "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was healed in that hour.

There is a vein of delightful humor in the passage where Jesus speaks of the Pharisees as "sounding trumpets" before them when they "do their alms." When they send a basket of provisions or half a ton of coal to some poor family, he represents them as hiring a band to go along. He also caricatures the ostentatious men who pray at the street corners "to be seen of men." "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward!" They pray to be seen of men, and they are seen of men. They get what they prayed for on the spot. There is nothing more coming to them.

We have abundant scriptural precedent therefore for the use of delicate humor of a high character. The quaint and unexpected turns in the presentation of truth have genuine value. We find it employed by some of the greatest preachers in the history of the Church. Even Phillips Brooks, restrained though he was by the stately conventions of his own communion, would now and then cause a smile to sweep over his congregation like a cool breeze on a summer day. Dean Hodges of the Episcopal Church used these unexpected turns habitually, and they contributed greatly to his usefulness in the service of the church. The dry Scotch humor introduced now and then by George A. Gordon, a preacher of high intellectual standards and with a firm philosophical grasp of eternal principles, has

added always to his attractiveness in the pulpit of the Old South Church, Boston. Henry Ward Beecher in the days of his power in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, introduced humor into his sermons repeatedly. It was the judgment of some of his more serious-minded people that now and then he used too much of it. He used to say that if the people had just laughed it would be much more easy to bring tears to their eyes by the effective appeal which followed. Charles H. Spurgeon, with all his earnest, evangelistic fervor, found place for the element of humor in those heartfelt appeals which reached out through all the English-speaking world.

It is not well for a minister to go out of his way even six inches in order to make a joke. But when some unexpected turn comes naturally in his treatment of some great truth, he is unwise to turn aside in order to avoid it. Let him study the great masters of delicate humor in the literature of the race! Let him use if he will those lighter statements which bring a sense of surprise. Let him employ "the finest of the wheat" in this matter of humor just in passing, with a touch and go, never waiting for a laugh, and he will find that by this method he has added greatly to his power of spiritual appeal. The people whose minds are quickened and refreshed may not laugh with their mouths—they will laugh with their eyes and they will be all the more ready to recognize and to accept the full value of the solid truth which is thus proclaimed.

The wise, guarded, and tasteful employment of humor now and then will aid in keeping alive in the minds of your hearers a full sense of the fact that you too are a

man. The uniformly solemn and excruciatingly pious parson who proclaims the fact that he has no sense of humor is hopeless. His people are likely to look upon him as our great-grandparents looked upon certain drastic spring medicines—not pleasant to take, but in some mysterious way "good for the system."

The Lord meant you to have feet and hands, arms and legs, a head and a heart as all your fellows have. He meant also that along with those more sedate faculties which are imperative in any useful ministry you too should have and evince a saving sense of humor. It will help to carry you through many a troubled situation in your parish experiences. Cherish it and cultivate it. And when the way is open for a bit of humor to make your presentation of the truth more complete, more interesting, more effective, allow it to have its day in court. For humor also is one of "the good gifts of our God."

The third element of this sort which I would name comes from the use of the imagination in preaching. You may feel, some of you, that this sounds like small potatoes and few in a hill. There was a time when I too would have said so without a moment's hesitation. But that was thirty years ago and more. We learn some things by hard knocks as we grow older. The good sermon is not all roast beef medium and mashed potato. Solid argument walks on the ground until imagination gives it wings to reach the high places of moral appeal.

It was Henry Ward Beecher, who knew quite a little about this august business of preaching the gospel, who remarked upon a certain occasion, "I regard the imagination as the most important of all the factors which go to

make the preacher." He was not comparing it, naturally, with Christian character or with the ability to read and write or with a sufficient amount of vocal strength to enable one to speak out loud. He took all those things for granted—they were necessities the use of which went without saying. But given these plain requisites without which we could not have any preaching at all worthy of the name, he made bold to utter that strong word on behalf of the imagination.

It has much to do with the exercise of faith. The Revised Version defines faith as the act of "giving substance to things hoped for." Whether this process shall be mainly a mere intellectual exercise or the upward, outward, Godward movement of a man's whole nature will depend largely upon the use he makes of his moral imagination. Here are certain claims not upon the face of them absurd or impossible but not susceptible of immediate scientific demonstration! I accept them as furnishing a good working hypothesis for human life. By an act of faith I give substance to them as things hoped for. Then I begin to act accordingly. By the hard tests of experience all those claims, God, prayer, duty, redemption, the sense of endless life already begun, become more and more real to me. And faith was the high mood which originally gave substance to them as "things hoped for" and answered back in terms of trust and obedience, of aspiration and high resolve.

By that wholesome use of the imagination which enables him to see the Unseen and to hear the Unuttered, the preacher can give such genuine and living substance to those "hoped-for things" as to cause them to exercise

their pull and lift upon the hearts and wills of all those to whom he speaks. He makes the absent present. He takes that which is historic and causes it to live and move and transact spiritual business there in those lives before him. He takes those things which are as yet only ideally possible and causes people to behold them as actually capable of being wrought out in terms of solid achievement.

At the heart of every splendid performance there is a vision, a dream, which has not yet come true. The artist sees an angel standing in the block of marble and his hands reach eagerly for mallet and chisel that he may bring it out. The teacher sees the hidden possibilities in that roomful of restless urchins and all her power comes at once to "attention" for the task of developing, maturing and enriching wholesome personality in all those young candidates for an existence worthy to be called human. The wise physician sees the improved health of an entire community, through better methods of sanitation and more skillful hygiene, and his human interest joins with his professional skill in moving toward that worthy end. The merchant or the manufacturer has a vision of his business as a great social utility, a means of bringing together the resources of earth and the needs of society, a place for the cultivation and the expression of intelligent good will—and that vision lifts him above the danger of becoming sordid in the pursuit of money. It sets him in paths of economic honor and of moral advance.

Now the ability to see in advance any one of those things as a thing hoped for and the further ability to make it live as an actual fact in the mind's eye of another

so that he too will see it and act upon it, comes by the exercise of moral imagination. Where there is no such vision, all the worthier elements of human life perish. Society goes to seed in the barren futility of its petty pursuits. Man cannot live at all by bread alone. Man lives by all those great words which proceed out of the mouth of God—faith, hope, love, courage, aspiration, high resolve—by these man lives!

There was a minister once with a dry, prosy, literal mind who read these exquisite lines from Shakespeare:

> "And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything."

He read all that in a newspaper and in his pedantic way he proceeded to comment upon it to the wife of his bosom. "Here is an amusing thing," he said. "It is evidently a misprint. No one ever saw a sermon in a stone and a book in a running brook would be all wet and useless. What the writer meant to say apparently was 'Sermons in books and stones in running brooks.'" Alas! poor man! What a dull time the patient people must have had who "sat under" his preaching, devoid as he was of imagination!

When you undertake to "preach Christ," as we say, you do not set out to give a dry catalogue of all the dates and facts in his earthly life such as might be found in "Who's Who." You do not merely recite in mechanical fashion, as some phonograph might, the precise words and sentences which fell from his lips. You do not undertake to unfold "The Plan of Salvation" discoverable in His

Incarnation, His Crucifixion and His Resurrection, with all the mighty theological truths involved, as might be done in some Westminster Confession of Faith. You might do all this with all the painstaking fidelity imaginable and yet fail utterly in your announced purpose. When you "preach Christ" you seek to have Him live and move and have His redemptive being, as He was, as He is now, in the fullness of His power, before the eyes and through the minds and in the hearts of those waiting people.

It was William Roscoe Thayer of Harvard who in writing of "History—Quick or Dead" insisted that "Four-fifths of the history written up to the present time has been dead. . . . The worship of Fact, which must not be confounded with Truth, does not lead us far. To know that Columbus discovered America on October 12th, 1492, or that the Declaration of Independence was made on July 4th, 1776, or that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo on June 18th, 1815, is interesting; but unless these statements are reënforced by much matter of a different kind they are hardly more important for us than it would be to know the number of leaves on a tree. And this is true though the facts be indefinitely multiplied.

"I have read, for instance, an account of the American Revolution in which the uncontroverted facts followed each other in as faultlessly correct a sequence as the telegraph poles which carry the wires over eight hundred and fifty miles of the desert of Gobi. The paramount interest in this case is not the number of poles but the purport of the telegrams flashed along the wires. . . . . The meaning of the sequent or scattered events in any historical move-

ment, be it of long duration or merely a fleeting episode—that alone can have significance for us." And it is the office of a well ordered imagination to people these "Valleys of Dead Facts" with moving interests that have life.

The bare events even of that matchless life which has come to be the light of the world have little power to change or to move the hearts of men until they are interpreted and related to the immediate interests of these lives of ours. It is for us, every man in his own order and according to the grace given him, to repeat and realize in our own experiences the majestic truths suggested by the Incarnation, the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. We are set not only to revere but according to the measure of our ability to reproduce the life which was in Him. And the minds of men can only be inspired to these high endeavors as the sacred, significant events which lie in the remote past are made to live before their eyes.

How vitally does the power of imagination enter into all that high endeavor! I do not mean anything capricious or fantastic. It is easily possible for a man to allow his imagination to run away with him as any sort of faculty may run wild when it is not held in leash by intelligence and conscience. It may land him in all manner of absurdity. I would not have you suffer from intellectual delirium tremens, seeing a lot of things which are not really there. I mean that wise exercise of a sane imagination which deals with unseen realities in such a way as to make them real indeed. The materialist sometimes tells us in his dry, cold way that he deals only in "facts." As if a thought, an impulse, a hope, a resolve,

a prayer, were not as much of a "fact" as a brick or a plant! As if Jesus Christ were not at this moment the sublimest "fact" ever known upon this common earth!

We look not solely at the things which are seen. They have their place and their value which of necessity must be limited because they are temporal. We look mainly at the things which are not seen because they are eternal. You can go out and saw wood or break rock in the street, you can wash the automobile or build a board fence without using your imagination. Whether or not you can read fairy stories or the stirring narratives of the Old Testament or the words which fell from the lips of Christ and know what it is all about and cause others to know, will depend in large measure upon your power of imagination. You cannot by any means do it well unless you are accustomed to look steadily at those unseen things which are eternal and really see something.

It is this element which differentiates literature from the reading matter to be found in the encyclopedia. The Britannica has facts, literature has vision. Read Baedeker on Mt. Blanc! It will give you the height of the mountain, the extent of the snow fields, the length and the age of the glaciers, the distance in kilometers from Chamounix to the summit. Then read Coleridge's "Ode to Mt. Blanc." Baedeker has the facts, Coleridge has vision.

Read Baedeker on Belgium including the detailed description of the field and of the Battle of Waterloo. Then read Victor Hugo's description of the Battle of Waterloo in his "Les Miserables" or the third canto of Byron's "Childe Harold":

"There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men."

Baedeker has the facts, the poets have vision. And without the exercise of imagination which underlies the power of vision the dry facts would be for us all but useless.

How the Bible is filled with this from start to finish! It was a poet who looked back to the period of the Creation and said, "The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." He saw the planets in their courses finding such happiness in their serene and august fidelity to the will of their Maker that they set their satisfaction to music and sang it as a hymn of praise from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same. He saw "the sons of God," the beings of moral capacity made in the divine likeness, finding such satisfaction in their high estate that they actually became noisy and boisterous about it. They "shouted for joy." We have here, as any one can see, no dry, prose statement of hard fact—it is poetry and its main appeal is to the imagination.

Why does the man who lives in Jersey City, on a narrow street, in an ugly tenement, engaged in the monotony of some repellent toil, his whole life dull and drab—why does he drink until he is drunk? He does it because the bottle of whisky is the shortest road out of Jersey City which he knows anything about. When he is thoroughly and joyously drunk, he too sees visions and dreams dreams after his kind. He feels strong and rich, successful and happy. (I am told that it is so—I am not speaking here

from personal experience.) He may know, poor chap, that there will come a sad awakening the morning after and a dark brown taste in his mouth and in his mind, but for an hour or two at least he has gotten out of Jersey City.

Now what he attempts so unworthily, we are helping men to achieve in ways which will not leave that dark brown taste in their mouths or in their souls. This is precisely what St. Paul had in mind when he said to those Ephesians, many of them living also in Jersey City!—"Be not drunken with wine wherein is excess but be filled with the Spirit." He would provide them with that better sort of exhilaration which would lift them out of the sordidness of their ordinary mode of life into that sense of life which is life indeed.

In all the cities of earth, Ephesus, Jersey City, New Haven, even Boston, there are multitudes of dull and dreary men and women, hungry for just that more radiant type of experience. You are sent there to lift them to that upper level where they too under wise guidance will see those visions and dream those dreams which in God's good time are all to come true.

How all the great poets used this power of imagination! Here was Robert Burns watching a farmer whose plowshare had just turned up and wrecked the nest of some field mice! He saw there suggested in that little scene, as the frightened creatures scurried to and fro in futile fashion, the whole tragedy of human existence.

"I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union

And justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion
And fellow mortal.

"That wee bit heap of weeds and stubble
Has cost thee many a weary nibble;
Now thou'rt turned out for all thy trouble.
. . . . .

"But, mousie, thou art not alone
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best laid plans o' mice and men
Gang aft agley,
And leave us nought but grief and pain
For promised joy.

"Still, thou art blessed compared with me:
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Oh, I backward cast my eye
On prospects drear
And forward, though I cannot see,
I guess and fear."

Burns stood there looking into that furrow, witnessing the consternation of those helpless mice and meditating upon the tragedy of his own life and of many another life, as compared with those lighter ills which fell upon these tiny creatures of the field. It all passed in review before his mind because he was a poet with the power of moral imagination. He had eyes to see, and he saw.

How wonderful was the exercise of this power in the life of the Son of Man! He had sent forth "the other seventy," the larger company of faithful disciples. He

mildness, and self-control." The great main business of the tree of life, which grew on this side the river and on that, was to bring forth an abundance of these wholesome fruits and to do it every month in the year. There was to be no unproductive winter of moral discontent in that garden of the Lord. But incidental to its main purpose, thrown in as you might say for good measure, "the *leaves* of the tree" were to be "for the healing of the nations." These lighter expressions of the tree's inner life, —products which would not weigh out bulk for bulk with apples and pears, products which would not begin to make an equal showing in solid food values—were also to have their place of honor and of usefulness in the great redemptive process.

See to it that your sermons have in them an abundant supply of that bread which cometh down from heaven to give life unto the world, bread which a man may eat and not die! Then let the leaves of your sermon, the lighter elements of illustration, of humor and of things imagined, be likewise set forth for the healing and the help, the comfort and the cheer of those who hear you.

VI

THE DELIVERY OF THE SERMON

HERE is the final test! Here you win or lose! All that has gone before helps or hinders, as the case may be, but the proof of the pudding is the eating. Here in the delivery of your sermon the nourishment which you have brought for a hungry congregation is either eaten with relish, satisfaction and resultant strength, or it is left on the plate as a bit of cold victuals, useless and repellent. Take heed therefore how you deliver!

What do we mean by "delivery?" What does it mean "to deliver" a telegram or an order of groceries? It means to get the thing to be delivered into the possession of the person for whom it was intended. There would be no delivery if the boy threw the groceries into the back alley, or tossed the telegram over the fence. In that case they would not reach the person for whom they were intended. Merely getting them out of his hands is not delivering them. Many sermons are never "delivered" at all. The minister gets his words out; he gets the sermon off of his mind and out of his system, but he does not lodge it in the minds and the hearts of the people to whom it is addressed. He has not delivered it in any true sense. In many cases there is only a partial delivery, the delivery of a small percentage of the real content of the sermon. Delivery is an intricate and a difficult process.

to insulate the preacher from those to whose needs he would minister. You lose a full third of yourself before you get across to that other shore where the people are. When a man is declaring his affection for a certain young woman and asking her to marry him, he does not get off twenty or thirty feet away and call it out to her in loud tones. As a matter of fact, I have never been personally present when that thing was being done but once in my life—on that occasion I remember distinctly that the man was not speaking at a long remove from the object of his desires. You are wooing those people to a Christian life and to more active Christian service—you can do it better if you are near enough almost to lay your hand upon the heads of those in the front pews.

The presence of an abundance of fresh air contributes steadily to the effective delivery of a sermon. The church sextons as a rule are strongly conservative at this point. In the last church I served I had a most obliging exception in the person of Charles S. Lewis, a man whom I shall always hold in affectionate remembrance as an honored friend. He was a lover of fresh air and of all other good things. But many church sextons do not want to change the old customs or the old theology or the old air. They like to keep it undisturbed, as though to preserve "an odor of sanctity" which seems to them altogether precious. In such churches "the garment of praise" fails to replace "the spirit of heaviness" for lack of fresh air.

There are certain flowers with a dull, heavy fragrance —hyacinths, tuberoses, Chinese lilies and the like— placed upon the altar occasionally by kind-hearted women who know not what they do, which serve to create an

atmosphere where people fall asleep more readily than they respond to spiritual appeal. The "heavy feeling" at funerals is not always due solely to personal grief on the part of the friends who have assembled—much of it is due to the "floral offerings." Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and open the windows to let in God's fresh air of which there will always be enough and to spare!

The church should be sufficiently light for the minister to be able to look into the faces of the people, and to know something as to what is going on in their minds. It should be light enough for the people to follow the changing expression in his own face. The "dim religious light" may have a certain value in promoting the feeling of reverence and the sense of something mysterious, but the clearer light offers better opportunity for compelling address. The true sermon is meant to say to all the cloudy confusion in which the minds and hearts of many are wont to move, "Let there be light!"

It is a distinct advantage not to have a broad aisle immediately in front of the pulpit stretching away in empty, unresponsive fashion to the front door of the church. That broad aisle is also objectionable because it is calculated to produce a certain sense of social distinction and separation which is out of place in the church of Christ. The people who sit on "the broad aisle" are likely to be regarded as the big bugs of the church, while those on the side aisles and in the galleries are relegated to the small insect class. It is much more inspiring to speak directly to columns of human faces than to speak into a long vista of well-worn church carpet.

These are all little things but they affect for good or

order to "get up my strength" for the work of the day. When the time came for the delivery of the sermon I then had two tasks on my hands, the digesting of all the beefsteak and fried potatoes, and the preaching of a sermon. It frequently turned out that the blood which should have been in my head was in my stomach. It is well-nigh impossible for the Holy Spirit to take a man full of fried sausage, hot biscuits, and other solid substances, and use him as a "chosen vessel" to make other people hunger and thirst after righteousness. The most powerful electric current cannot pass through certain non-conductors. You can make your body an effective insulation against Divine help.

Personally I am opposed to the use of all kinds of stimulants. The Eighteenth Amendment has practically removed alcoholic stimulants from our reach, even if there were no conscientious scruples among ministers against their use. I would also lay under ban the habitual use of tea and coffee. They are drugs—caffeine is a powerful drug. It may be advisable to use it as a drug when a man has suffered all night Saturday night from toothache, but the habitual use of such a stimulant is a disadvantage. When a man has taken two or three cups of strong coffee he feels good oftentimes when he has no right to feel good. He is constantly teaching his nerves to lie to him. The man who lives without stimulants knows always exactly where he is.

The toiler who works mainly with his hands and in the open air can do many things with impunity which would prove perilous for you. The man who does the greater part of his work indoors seated at a desk, living during

all of his waking hours under more or less of a nervous and mental strain, had best let stimulants alone. If you drink strong coffee habitually and in generous quantity, you may see the time when insomnia will come like a thief in the night and steal away your sleep. You may lie awake all night, as many a nerve-racked minister has done, hearing the clock strike all the hours and all the half hours until the day dawns and the shadows do not flee away. You may do the same thing the next night and the next. And if that sorry experience falls to your lot, you will not on the third day feel like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. In the long run, the nerves which have not been tampered with by the use of any kind of stimulants or narcotics will show themselves most reliable in sustained intellectual effort and in public address.

The main tool to be used in the delivery of the sermon is your voice. See to it that you keep your tools in good order as workmen approved unto God who need not be ashamed! The minister is under moral obligation so to train and so to use his throat and other vocal organs as to avoid all sore throat, colds and hoarseness, which always diminish where they do not actually destroy effective delivery. You can afford to dash the coldest water available on your throat and chest every morning for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. This heroic treatment will serve to stimulate the circulation in that part of your body and to temper your throat until it becomes, like your face, not susceptible to injury by sudden changes of temperature. The man who is to speak will succeed better if he wears a loose collar which allows the free circulation

frequently prove to be a misfit, come immediately before the sermon. The best thing that the people in a congregation can do to prepare their minds for the reception of a sermon is to sing together in hearty fashion some suitable hymn which shall prepare the way for the message of the hour.

Hear these wise words from one who combines the love of beauty with the love of God. In his "Art and Religion," Von Ogden Vogt says, "A sermon should begin interestingly but the heavier burden of impression should come with the climax and at the close. Therefore some more common and ordinary exercise such as a hymn should immediately precede the sermon. If the order of worship has developed an imaginative outlook and an emotional power by itself, the cycle of its psychological course should be brought to a certain conclusion before the beginning of the sermon. There should be something to ground the attention after the first emotional uplift, something to bring back the whole situation, so to speak, to 'neutral clutch.' An artistic solo does not do this. It does too much. Something else is required which will enable the sermon to begin lower down as it were and then lead to a fresh ascent of the emotions."

The preacher does well to begin his sermon as if he expected every one to listen from the very first word. He may well wait a moment for the people to become quiet before he announces his text. We read of One who "went into the synagogue as his custom was and stood up to read. . . . And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him." Then in the hush of that complete attention "he began to say unto them"

words which they never forgot as long as they lived. The preacher's very look and bearing, if he knows what he is about, will help to produce the sense that something of significance is about to occur. The well-bred horse knows instantly whether the man who has just mounted him is or is not accustomed to riding. Even so the congregation feels instinctively the presence of a man who understands his business. When you enter upon the delivery of your sermon, have your eyes upon the people instead of fussing over your hymn book or with the notes or the notices upon the desk. If your eyes are upon them, the chances are that their eyes and their minds will be upon you.

The delivery of the sermon had best begin in an easy conversational tone. If you start in immediately after the style of Spartacus addressing the gladiators or of Webster replying to Hayne, it may put upon your hearers a strain so sudden and so severe as to disconcert them. It will also make it difficult for you to increase steadily the power and effectiveness of your delivery in the further development of your theme. Begin on the level even though you are proposing to carry the whole congregation up into the seventh heaven of spiritual ecstasy when the right moment comes. When I begin my sermon, especially in some strange church where I may never have preached before, I usually fix my eye on some one in the rear of the church, and make my first remark to him. If I can gain and hold his attention from the very start I may be fairly sure that I am winning a sympathetic hearing from all the rest. If the opening sentences of the sermon are not uttered too rapidly or in too loud a tone of voice this will give time for your vocal organs to adjust

themselves to the task of delivery. The tone of dignified conversation furnishes the staple method for effective delivery. It wears better than any other style of speech. The men who shout and roar in the pulpit are not the men who speak to the human heart the words of eternal life.

The great parliamentary speakers in England—Herbert H. Asquith, Arthur J. Balfour, David Lloyd George—speak habitually in a quiet conversational tone. The greatest English actors are as a rule much less stagey and are more simple in their manner than are many of our American actors. When Wendell Phillips was delivering those speeches on the abolition of slavery which aroused the passions of the people to the point where they sometimes answered back with bad eggs and brick-bats, he did it in a quiet, well modulated tone of voice. There need be nothing tame or spiritless about this method of delivery—the highest art is to be found ever in the right use of that which is simple and natural.

For nine-tenths of the time there may well be a sense of reserve power in the preacher's delivery. He keeps his chest full of air so that his tones may be well sustained. He bears himself with such ease that the people are feeling all the while that if he wished he could readily let out another hole in his belt. He has himself so completely in hand that every faculty is steadily contributing to the end he has in veiw. The properties of the whole man—face, voice, eyes, arms, legs, frame, throat, and lungs—are acting together in the spirit of team work for the achievement of a certain high end.

The delivery of a sermon is no easy task. There are

some men whom you simply cannot listen to, however you may try. There are other men whom you can listen to by a steady and resolute effort. There are other men who speak in such fashion that you cannot help listening to them. It is for us to strive, every man of us, to be enrolled in that third class. "His word was with power" —there was no escape for those who heard, from its accent of authority.

The heart has large place in the delivery of a sermon. Unless the man is directly sympathetic with his theme and with his main purpose in preaching that particular sermon, the whole service will savor of the nature of a mechanical performance. The cold, hard, selfish, indifferent, ungodly man can never preach a sermon on the love of God or upon any of the worthier aspects of human nature with any effect, I care not what splendid material he may have in his notes. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not the love of God in my heart and a great warm love for those people to whom my words are addressed, I become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

There should be no least suspicion of the self-conscious, the pompous, the dictatorial attitude in the man who is preaching the gospel of the Son of God. He is not laying down the law to a long-suffering congregation. If he flings out carelessly and harshly against the shortcomings of his fellow-beings in a sort of "keep-off-the-grass" manner, he will defeat the very ends he has in view. There is a lot of pain and grief in the world connected up by spiritual wireless with those lives there before him—let him set himself deliberately and sympathetically to min-

ister to all that need. He is not seeking to have lordship over their minds, but to be a helper in their time of stress. He is there, as St. Paul was, to be "their servant for Jesus' sake." He may well say by his bearing, by his tone of voice, and by the very atmosphere he bears with him into the pulpit, "I am among you as one who serves."

I shall never forget the description given by a friend of mine of a service which he once attended in the city of London. The preacher was George MacDonald. He entered the pulpit, not arrayed in conventional black, but in a gray tweed suit and a red necktie. The tokens of his ordination were not in his clothes but in his life.

He read for the Scripture lesson that morning the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. When the time came for the sermon, George MacDonald said: "You have all heard about these men of feyth. I shall not try to tell you what feyth is—there are theological professors who can do that much better than I could do it. I am here to help you to believe." Then followed such a simple, heartfelt, and majestic manifestation of the man's own faith in those unseen realities which are eternal, as to beget faith in the minds and hearts of all his hearers. His heart was in his work, and his delivery was effective because it rested back upon the genuine beauty of his own inner life.

Every man who preaches at all must launch out into the deep where, as he knows full well, the water is over his head. He must hold up before the aspiring hearts of his hearers ideals which have by no means been fully realized in his own imperfect life. He must point to higher levels

of spiritual experience, where he has not as yet been able to walk himself with even tread. If he would not make his preaching pathetically meager in its outlook, he must allow his utterance to outrun his achievements, saying with the apostle "not as though I had already attained or were already made perfect, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and reaching for the things which are ahead, I press toward the mark."

All this is so evident as to go without saying. Yet even so, the best part of any man's deliverance is that which comes forth in vital fashion out of the heart of his own experience of the truth it contains. That higher mode of life which he makes bold to urge upon his fellows must have its beginnings and its promise of ultimate success in the depths of his own soul. It must be that if his preaching is to be anything better than a theatrical performance.

The devil of unreality goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The first house he heads for when he comes to town is the parsonage. If he is allowed to get in and to make himself at home among your habits of speech and of life he will eat you up almost before you know it. The only way to keep that beast, and all the wolves which travel with him, from your door, is to make sure that the best part of your preaching roots down genuinely into the moods and purposes of your own heart. "The preacher who really believes the half-truth, will have more power than the preacher who half believes the whole truth."

How the deeper experiences of Jesus conditioned and then fortified his utterance! He not only introduced a

finer mode of worship which should be "in spirit and in truth" for his own Christian followers, he also changed the mode of worship for faithful Jews. He hoped to abolish the very habit of animal sacrifices which was in vogue when he came upon the scene. "The great volume of sacrifice had been pouring through innumerable channels," as William J. Tucker once said, "from the heart of man into the heart of God. Christ met and overwhelmed the sacrifice of man with the sacrifice of God. It was the inflowing tide of the ocean staying and returning the waters from river and creek which were seeking its bosom."

"The act of Jesus was an act of sublime daring. We ask instinctively, Who is it that bids men cease their propitiatory rites? Who is it that puts out the fires on sacrificial altars and stanches the blood of sacrificial victims? It is He who carries out the change in his own person and offers himself as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It is the man who has experienced the truth he would utter, by the struggles and the triumphs of his own heart, who wins the right, and gains the power to speak not as the scribes who had learned their lessons out of a book, but as one having authority.

It would be difficult to say how much of religion is feeling. The feeling of dependence upon a Higher Power! The sense of kinship with the Eternal! The yearning for a more complete fellowship with the Unseen! The consciousness of accountability to One who sits forever upon the Great White Throne! The quiet sense of sweet security when we know Whom we have believed!

All these deep and precious states of feeling enter into the very warp and woof of religious experience. You cannot address yourself to those more delicate and intimate emotions, you cannot mold them or utilize them in the formation of finer types of character unless you have already entered into them yourself. The heart knows the language of the heart as no other faculty ever can.

The considerations of prudence may point to certain conclusions as solid and verifiable as the statements of the multiplication table and as powerless to move men to higher levels of purpose. The voice of reason and the finger of expediency may indicate a certain line of action as clear and plain as the North Star—and as coldly remote from human well being. We are hearts as well as heads. We are hearts even more than we are heads.

The men who wrote the Bible wrote with their pens and with their minds up to a certain point, but when they would have us see visions and dream dreams they wrote with their hearts. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" because men and women do mainly those things which they feel like doing. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"—he cannot achieve that high end in any other way. Therefore any one who ignores sentiment or makes light of feeling in order to leave more room for the chilly dictates of a coldly calculated expediency makes a sorry trade.

"The night has a thousand eyes
And the day but one
Yet the light of the whole world dies
When the sun is gone.

"The mind has a thousand eyes
And the heart but one
But the light of the whole life dies
When love is done."

Keep therefore as the preachers of a gospel which came from the heart of God when He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son—keep therefore your hearts with all diligence! Keep them filled and charged with delicate sensibility, with tender devotion and with joyous enthusiasm, with gracious longings and with high resolve, for out of the heart are the issues of life. The best language and the best style of utterance, like the best type of courtesy, have their seat in the depths of the soul. They cannot therefore be put on or put off at will as we change our clothes.

When you feel as a man ought to feel in preaching upon certain great truths, your attitude and bearing, your voice with its varying inflections and modulations, your accent and your emphasis, as you pass lightly here and rest your whole weight there, have a way of falling into line. If you have had any sort of right training in making your body responsive to your thought these lesser faculties will recognize and obey their superior officer. In any great emotional crisis, sad or glad, which lifts a man for the moment quite out of himself, his elocution and his gestures, unstudied though they may be, are likely to be above criticism. If then you would make the delivery of your message touching the great verities at once sincere and artistic you must live in them as a man who would go no more out.

If you would preach well keep your heart ever in the presence of whatsoever things are just and true and pure, in the presence of whatsoever things are honorable and reputable and lovable. Keep it there until the inevitable reactions come to abide with you evermore in finer forms of feeling. Then as you stand up to deliver your sermon, really to deliver it and leave it as a precious possession lodged in the lives of those who hear you, let those feelings course through your veins like rich red blood and the God of Peace shall be with you.

It was my good fortune in my seminary days to hear Phillips Brooks preach almost every Sunday for the better part of the three years. It was a privilege unspeakable for any man, particularly for a raw, unformed young theologue. His sermons were full of sensible, scriptural, helpful ideas. He was at home in the best of the world's great literature and his diction had in it dignity and grace. Yet even so those who have never heard him preach do not, in large numbers, find his published sermons attractive. His delivery of them had in it none of the studied and prearranged tricks of the professional elocutionist. His utterance was so rapid as to be the despair of all but the most expert stenographers—the words came pouring out at the rate of two hundred or more per minute. He never made the least attempt at what the world commonly calls "oratory." But it was wonderful preaching. I can feel the tingle of it yet in my nerves and the inspiration of it in the inmost recesses of my soul even though it will be thirty years next January since he died.

The great power of his uttered sermon lay in the fact

that there before our eyes as we listened was a great and beautiful soul. He was a man of God, a lover of his fellows, a benign and sympathetic spirit, reaching out the hand of help to each one of us that he might lift us up. The soul of the man back of his sermon, breathing through it, underlying it as a sure foundation for its reality, overarching it as a benediction from above—the soul of the man preached as he delivered into our hearts the full content of what he had brought. It was deep calling unto deep, bringing up from profounder sources of motive and stimulus those new impulses which sent us out to run the race set before us with a finer and a firmer purpose.

Your effectiveness in the delivery will be strongly influenced by the style in which you have prepared your sermon. When the missionary goes to China or to India his first task is to learn the language. He may spend two or more years of hard work making himself at home in the vernacular. He keeps at it until he can speak the tongue of those whom he would win to Christian life in clear-cut, vigorous fashion with the native idiom and the accent of reality in every word of it.

In the vision of the seer, the One who was set to win, to rule and to save the nations "had a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth." His sword was not on his hip nor in his hand but in his mouth. Here between his lips was the hiding of his power. He was to achieve by the spoken word. In like manner you are under bonds to learn to speak the English language as well as it lies within the power of a man of your size to speak it as a result of years of hard study and literary discipline. It was One who spake as never man spake who said, "By

thy words shalt thou be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Your style is the garment in which you clothe your thought. You cannot send your ideas out naked—they will refuse to go if they have any shred of modesty about them, and people will refuse to welcome them into good society if they undertake to make their approach in such an unseemly way. The reception which your message will enjoy at the hands of men will depend in large measure upon whether or not it is well-dressed.

The best style for public address is one which makes your thought presentable, interesting, effective, without ever attracting the attention of the people to itself. A woman has always overdone it if the people who meet her in society think more about her clothes than they do about her. She is dressed exactly right when her robing serves to render her in the total impression made by her personality a lovelier and a more interesting factor in social life.

The word style came from "stylus," a point. It was the instrument the Romans used for their writing. It indicates the chief means of gaining a good style. Write! Write! Write! And then having done all, write some more! You had best write something every day if it is nothing more than a brief paragraph on the back of some old letter. Let it represent the very best that you can do in composition. If you have already learned to write shorthand or an abbreviated long hand, all the better—you can thereby exercise yourself in careful composition without too great an expenditure of time.

Write sermons. Write them out in full from time to

time, even though you may not be a manuscript preacher. It will make the sermons you preach from outlines much better in their literary form. Write an occasional article for your religious paper—have something to say, say it and say it in the strongest, clearest, mose persuasive manner you can exhibit. When you have the chance take a sermon which seemed to "go well," as we say, and rewrite it, making it fifty per cent better than it was in thought and in style. Write on the margins and on the fly leaves of the books you read—write out the thoughts that have been started into being by what the author said. Say something additional yourself and say it as well as or even better than the author said his say. By this means you will "covet earnestly the best gifts" and be constantly reaching for "a more excellent way" of expressing your own ideas.

We have been told on high authority that "reading makes a full man." So does drinking. In both cases the man who has overdone it shows signs of dizziness and intoxication as a result of his "load." Throw the book aside occasionally and write something of your own. "Writing makes an exact man" and thinking makes a creative man.

There are three main marks of a good pulpit style which will shed strength and beauty into your delivery. First, clearness! It does not matter what you say if people do not understand what you are driving at and understand it right off. You are speaking straight along and they cannot linger over a difficult sentence seeking with dictionary and grammar to puzzle out your meaning as we do when we read Browning's "Sordello." Your

next sentence will strike them between their eyes before they have time for any such effort. Your meaning has to be clear as the tones of the bell on a locomotive because there is no time for them to "stop and look and listen" while you are delivering your sermon. I had rather speak five words which men will hear and feel and taste than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

Being dull and obscure is not being deep. There are light-headed young preachers who have a fear that if they bring out their slender stock of ideas so clearly and so simply that the people will see the purport of it all from start to finish, they may be regarded as shallow and superficial. They insist therefore on wrapping up their thoughts in thick garments padded with verbiage something like the old Russian coachmen in Petrograd who were so eager to display figures of generous proportions.

The complicated sentence which reels to and fro and staggers like a drunken man will have the people at their wits' ends to know what their beloved pastor is up to in those verbal tangles. When R. W. Dale of Birmingham was giving the Lyman Beecher Lectures here, he told us of a preacher whom he used to hear occasionally in his youth whose sermons invariably consisted of a series of unwieldy sentences, each one "sprouting out into joint after joint and never ceasing to grow until for some inexplicable but altogether beneficent reason, he finally said, Amen."

If you would have a good speaking style use short words for the most part! Short sentences for the most part! The long involved sentence which looks like the map of an archipelago with various outlying islands of

meaning and of qualifying clause scattered along on either side of the main body of land is fatal to an effective delivery. Short paragraphs, where you round out your treatment of some particular idea with measurable completeness and then pass on to something else! Put it clearly when you prepare your sermon if you would deliver it with power.

When Daniel Webster was quite a young man he gave a Fourth of July oration at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Fourth of July address in those days was likely to be a form of speech where one would hear the flapping of the angel's wings and the scream of the eagle's mouth. The editor of a thoughtful review published the oration in full together with some words of wise criticism which ended like this: "Here is a lot of rhetoric which is mere wording. If the speaker cannot learn to use simple and sincere language he can never be an orator for the common people." When Webster was at the height of his power and his laurels were sure, he said, "I read that criticism over and over, and finally concluded that if I was to get my living by talking to plain people, I must have a plain style."

The good pulpit style is also marked by force. "The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" has in it the strength of tempered steel. Pick out words which can stand up straight. Build them into sentences strong enough to pry a reluctant man out of his pew if need be. Build your paragraphs as men build bridges, strong enough to carry without a tremor the full weight of your biggest truths as you put them across. Write out your sentences and then utter them aloud, thus testing them

to ascertain whether or not they will bear the weight you propose to put upon them without signs of breaking.

You have already learned no doubt not to end a sentence with a preposition. It was a dainty, fastidious teacher of English in the High School who said once, "A preposition is not a good word to end a sentence *with*." You do not want to end a sentence with any sort of weak, anemic word. Spontaneity, promiscuity, miscellaneous, differentiation—these are all respectable words in good and regular standing in our dictionaries but they furnish the poorest kind of a terminal for an uttered sentence. Plan your sentence so that when you let your voice fall at the end it will come down with a word strong enough to drive your period in clear to the head.

If you would have a vigorous pulpit style shun the habit of propping up your sentences all along with little qualifying clauses and with modifying phrases, lest some dunce should in the absence of those five barred gates turn into your statement more meaning than you intended. You have heard of the careful young divinity student who desired above all things to be guarded in his utterance. He said to his people one Sunday, with his head on one side and the vox humana stop in his voice pulled out full length, "My beloved hearers, if I may call you so, you are under some measure of moral obligation to repent, so to speak; and in case you do not, I would venture to suggest that there is a remote possibility that you may be damned, as it were, to a certain extent."

How far all this is from the clear, strong, crisp style of our Lord! "He that saveth his life shall lose it." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle

than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." "No man can serve two masters." "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." "The life is more than meat." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." How firm and sure was His touch upon truth as He put it in words! The man who cannot learn to utter sentences as strong and as straight as steel ramrods, would better become a man milliner dealing with feathers and trimmings rather than undertaking to speak in public to his needy fellows in words which are "spirit and life."

Your style should be marked in the best sense by a natural beauty. You are not striving primarily for elegance. You do not want to make the sword of the spirit so handsome that you will be afraid to draw it and use it. Beauty in public address does not mean posy work or excessive ornamentation. Is a beautiful woman ever more beautiful than when she is dressed in pure white with perhaps a single red rose to give that touch of color which makes her white array seem all the lovelier? The style of an address like the style of a dress may be severely chaste and simple and yet be elegant in the best sense of that word.

You can deliberately and conscientiously avoid rant and all "tall talk" and that wild exaggeration which would bring upon your words and upon your life the reproach of insincerity. Ministers more than most men, perhaps, by the very fact that they are dealing all the while with interests so gigantic and with issues so far reaching, are prone to overstatement. The story is told of a certain Methodist preacher so much inclined to exaggeration that

after his Presiding Elder had admonished him in vain, his brother ministers voted that he be called before the bar of the Conference and be publicly reproved by the Bishop. The reproof was given in a kindly affectionate way and was received by the erring brother with becoming submission. He promised to reform. He expressed great sorrow for his fault, and assured the Bishop that this habit of exaggeration had cost him many "pangs of remorse" and that over it he had already shed "barrels of tears."

In the interest of a good style you can rejoice in a close fit between your meaning and your phrases, your words closing in around your ideas like well-made gloves. You can avoid the use of all terms which have been soiled and stained by unseemly associations until they are no better than street drabs. You can eliminate hackneyed threadbare expressions which have been worn on so many pairs of lips as to be worn out. We have now a whole collection of wearied and wearisome phrases in current use to-day,—"One hundred per cent American," "Red-blooded men," "Live wires," "good mixers"—which might well be retired as belonging to the superannuated list. They have long since become so completely out at the elbows and run down at the heel as to be fit only for the rummage sale.

You may by right method feed your style when it shows unmistakable signs of becoming weak, thin, famine-stricken. You can keep your style fresh and unworn by replenishing it frequently with a new stock of useful phrases. Words get tired as razors do—so the barbers tell us—and they beg for respite, even as the patient peo-

ple who grow weary under the ceaseless repetition of certain phrases, have already been begging for a respite. "Words have nervous prostration as human beings have and when long overworked they should have an outing and a rest."

The style of many public speakers has been weakened and depleted by over-indulgence in newspaper reading. The English of the average newspaper is poor in quality. It is hastily written, to be hastily read and as hastily thrown aside. The style becomes inevitably diffuse, sloppy and frayed. Live with the great masters of English expression—The King James translation of the Bible and Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson, John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, James Anthony Froude and John Henry Newman! Live with them and upon them until a weak, shabby, muddy style would instantly repel you.

I am not pleading here for you to become phrase makers —God forbid! You have only twenty-five or thirty minutes for your sermon and the cutting out of useless verbiage in order that those things which are supreme and vital may be said becomes a most important consideration. You are lost unless you strive for a style clear-cut and compact. But strength and beauty can by persistent practice be brought readily within that briefer compass which is always to be desired. "The language of the pulpit," as a wise college president who was also an excellent preacher once said, "must be the language of certainty, the language of sympathy and the language of hopefulness."

Hear this bit from Joseph Parker of the City Temple, London! How much he said and suggested in a few

words! He was preaching from the text, "God is not worshiped by men's hands, as though He needed anything." He was pointing out the difference between "needing" a thing and "wanting" it. Pointing to a vase of wild flowers on his pulpit he remarked, "These flowers were growing yesterday in Devonshire. They were plucked for me by a tiny pair of hands that I love. Did I need them? No. Did I want them? Your little daughter kissed you yesterday morning when you started to your business. Did you need it? Did you want it?"

You may think in the vanity of your mind that if only you have knowledge, full and profound, it will get itself expressed. It may after a fashion. You may, as the English would say, "muddle through." But your thought will only get itself expressed in such a way as to make the delivery of your sermon effective where you take pains to learn how. Pack your sentences with meaning. Squeeze the water out of them so they will be full of useful appetizing substance. Shape them up as sentences which are to be said rather than read. Then stand up in the full strength of your Christian manhood and utter them as messages from the Lord you serve.

Hear these words on style by one of the best preachers in New York City! "Select the broad-shouldered nouns and stalwart verbs which will best carry the weight of your ideas. Choose adjectives which will not exaggerate and adverbs which will not give a false accent or color. Frame the sentences with words so clear that your truth will blaze out through them. Whip your paragraphs into subjection to your ruling purpose so that they shall carry your thoughts on to fresh coronations in the hearts of

those who listen. This is one of the greatest achievements to which any mortal can aspire. It is a victory so difficult and glorious that to win it is worth an entire lifetime of heroic and unflagging toil. Use your pen—it is the key to one of the kingdoms of power."

The King's English like the King's daughter is meant to be "all-glorious within." It is meant to clothe your ideas "in wrought gold." It is meant to "make your arrows sharp in the heart of the King's enemies." It is meant to "ride forth in its majesty and to ride prosperously" because of the truth and righteousness it contains. "Grace has been poured into its lips," therefore God blesses it forever upon the high errand to which it is sent. If you will only strive to have it so, your own style may exhibit those elements of clearness, of strength and of beauty which will add to the power of your spoken word now thirty, now sixty and at times even one hundredfold.

If you can, by the discipline of hard work and by the grace given you from above, learn how to prepare a sermon which will lend itself to an effective delivery; and if you can bring your body, your mind and your heart into subjection to the high purpose involved in real preaching, one can scarcely set any assured limit to the measure of good which you may thus bring to the lives of the people who hear you. It would not be too much to assert that you too can in reverent, humble fashion say of your own uttered word what was said of old touching that word of God which finally became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not

thither but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud . . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

VII

THE SETTING OF THE SERMON

THE best type of sermon does not stand detached from all else. In its work of ministering to the spiritual life, it had best not be "a priest after the order of Melchizedek" with no supporting antecedents to strengthen its power of appeal. It adds to its own inherent strength by being related in some organic way to other factors in the common task of Christian nurture. The sermon may well claim for itself all the reënforcement which may arise from a worthy setting.

I am a firm believer in the value of courses of sermons, where there is some uniting principle extending through the entire series linking up part with part in a consistent whole. There is nothing to be gained by stringing together a lot of colored beads of varied form and hue upon some slender thread of interest which barely suffices to bridge the gap between Sundays. But a genuine series, where the sermons mark successive steps in the unfolding of some great truth too large and too intricate for treatment in a single discourse, will contribute to the effectiveness of any pulpit.

It will be for your own good as teachers of religion to outline and develop in systematic fashion from time to time such courses of sermons. It will train you in better methods of study. It will help to save you from the skittering, promiscuous way of presenting religious truth

which is the bane of so many pulpits. It will enable you to utilize the results of some special line of reading which you have been pursuing for an entire season. It will strengthen the habit of seeing all truths in their relation to other cognate truths and in right perspective. It will round out your treatment of the more august aspects of religion. No minister can say everything about any great theme in one sermon—he cannot say everything about it in two sermons, nor in ten, but he can say much more in ten than he can in two.

It will also be good for your people to have the Gospel presented in this more orderly manner. It will add greatly to the instructional value of your preaching, if they are taught to see the various ideas you bring to them in these wider relations. The repeated impressions made where some vital truth is approached on successive Sundays from different angles, viewed now in the cool north light of intellectual scrutiny and now in a warmer southern exposure of generous feeling; where the same truth is seen in all its rosy promise with the early morning light upon it and then viewed again in the more mellow evening light of the setting sun—these repeated impressions are altogether wholesome. The wise trial lawyer brings his argument for a verdict before the jury now by this route and now by that, until by virtue of these successive presentations he has convinced their minds and persuaded their judgments.

The course of sermons also serves to steady the people in their church attendance, particularly at the evening service which as a rule has in it a larger percentage of opportunists and occasional hearers. The well arranged

series of sermons will oftentimes change casual into regular attendants and fix them in that more wholesome habit. You will naturally strive with all your might to make the first sermon in any series as strong, as interesting and as vital as you know how to make it. You will make it "suggestive" in the best sense, as it opens doors upon broader vistas which (as you delicately intimate in passing) are to be followed up later. The people having felt the strong appeal of that initial sermon in the series will make up their minds to hear them all. And when they have been at church for eight or ten successive Sunday evenings they will have taken a real step toward becoming regular attendants.

The course of sermons also gains in general attractiveness. When some commanding theme is announced on your church calendar and through the newspapers with six or eight inviting topics springing naturally from it, the people will feel that this is too large an order to be ignored. They might be able to resist the appeal of a single sermon standing alone. We find to our dismay that an amazing number of people in any community where we may be called to preach are able to stand out against this alluring prospect. They find it easier to decline our offers piecemeal but when we offer them a whole bill-of-fare, with half a dozen appetizing courses in it, more of them at least may accept the invitation. "Come," we say in scriptural phrase, "the oxen and the fatlings are killed and all things are now ready. Come ye to the feast."

The course of sermons will enable you to use printer's ink more effectively. You can shape up attractive display

advertisements in the church notices of your local paper where you are announcing an entire series of sermons. You can use window cards perhaps in some of the stores. You can have a tastefully gotten up bulletin outside of your church. The children of light can afford to be as canny as the children of this world—we have high warrant for such an attempt. You can set the people of a community to talking about the course of sermons now projected or in actual operation at "the little church around the corner" in such a way as to put that church more completely upon the map of common interest.

The course had best not be too long. It is easily possible to have "too much of a good thing," too much of a great many good things, where it is all flung at us at once. As Ian Maclaren said here at Yale, "The people lose heart at the prospect of sixteen sermons on 'St. Paul's Idea of Faith' or twenty-four discourses on Job. I could not personally recommend one mentioned to me by a pious minister on 'The Limbs of the Almighty,' although he assured me that it had enabled him to include some extraordinary texts and that it had been much blest."

You can from season to season by a well ordered series of sermons, make a more varied appeal to the different classes of minds and of needs in the community you are set to serve. "Fishers of men," you remember! That is the way our commission reads! You are not there to follow slavishly some preconceived notion of your own as to what sort of flies should get a rise out of the fish which swim in those waters. You are there to study their habits and their preferences in order to catch them if you can. If the lure of such standardized appeals as might be sug-

gested by a Royal Coachman, a Brown Hackle or a Professor does not achieve the desired end, then you may well turn over another leaf in your fly book and try them with Silver Doctors and Parmachene Belles. "Follow me," said One, who in the freshness and the originality of His method of approach as in all else, is the Master of us all! "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

In my own work as a settled pastor I made it a rule every other winter at least to preach a course of sermons to young men. The young men themselves are likely to be there in unwonted numbers because you are dealing directly with their interests and problems. The young women will be there because they will want to hear what you are saying to the young men and because of their interest (entirely unselfish of course) in the spiritual welfare of those young fellows. The fathers and mothers of young men will feel a very deep and tender concern touching that whole subject with which you are dealing. They will be there, with prayers on their lips and with a great, sweet sense of gratitude in their hearts, if you are doing your work well. You can safely count on a sufficient measure of general interest to save such a course of sermons from ever becoming in any sense a narrow, over-specialized presentation. You can if you will sound the deeper note of appeal to our common humanity.

You could preach a course of sermons on "The Young Man's Affairs,"—his main purpose, his intimates, his books, his recreations, his money, his wife, his church. During another season you could preach on The Young Man's Assets,—his body, his brain, his trade, his investments, his amusements, his religion. You can deal, as

you go along, with those interests and habits which are likely to become liabilities rather than assets. You could during some other season make an entirely different approach. You can speak on The Young Man's Questions! How much of an education shall I get? Shall I learn a trade or try for a profession? How shall I spend my evenings? How shall I spend my Sundays? Shall I go into politics? How much time shall I give to society? What shall be my relation to the church?

You will be dealing in every case with the same fundamental interests but you can vary your approach in such a way as to make each series interesting and helpful. The last church I served was only a block from the High School building with its fifteen hundred young people, and not far from a great State University with its more than six thousand students. During the opening weeks of the college year one autumn I preached a series of evening sermons on "The Students' Problems." The choices of the first year, athletics, fraternities, the decision as to a life work and the religion of a student! The very preparation of such a series of sermons will help you to get into the right mood to speak to that body of young life there within reach. It will help you to see the world through their eyes. It will enable you to speak to them in the tongue in which they were born and with which they are transacting a lot of business which has to do with the formation of character.

You could preach a course of doctrinal sermons, ten of them if you like, dealing with the doctrine of God, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, the inspiration of the Bible, the philosophy of prayer, the fact of conversion,

the hope of a future life and other cardinal truths of our Christian faith. The people will come with their ears and their minds open, if you do not frighten them away by announcing the course as "doctrinal sermons." Your truth will smell as sweet by some other name and it will attract more people if you do not label it as "dogma."

You could take up in another series the whole question of the utilization of mental and spiritual forces for the gaining and maintenance of sound health. We have been prone to leave all that too much to irregular, wild-cat organizations outside of the church of Christ. If the church itself had been up to the mark thirty-five years ago in its presentation of a full-orbed, well-rounded gospel designed of God to make people every whit whole, we would not have had a Christian Science movement, a Dowie movement, a New Thought movement and all the other "movements" which have sometimes been scarcely better than diverting antics.

You could take up the application of the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to social and industrial problems and thus aid in the development of that intelligent and insistent spirit of good will in which alone these vexed questions can be solved. You could thus promote among the people of your community that social habit of mind, which is of much more value than many of the economic devices and social panaceas which get us nowhere.

You may wish sometime to preach a series of sermons historical in their setting and background. You can make them intensely vital and practical as you relate the principles involved to the needs represented by those lives

there before you. You could announce a course of sermons on this general text—"There was a man sent from God whose name was John." As a matter of fact there have been a lot of men sent from God whose names were John. John the Baptist and John the Beloved Disciple, John Wycliffe and John Knox, John Calvin, John Wesley and John Bunyan, John Milton and John Robinson! When you have finished such a course of sermons your people will have had served up to them a big, broad, juicy slice of church history, full of nourishing and inspiring truths for the good of their own souls.

You could with great profit to yourself and to your people follow for ten months the cycle of lessons and themes in "The order of the Christian Year" as laid down in the liturgies of the Church Universal. You could begin in the month of December with the assignments for the Sundays in Advent leading up to and preparing the way for the birth of Christ at Christmas. You could move on through the record of the appearance of the twelve-year-old boy in the Temple, and the Baptism, the Temptation and the early events in the ministry of Jesus. On the other Sundays between the Epiphany and Lent you could take up in an orderly way some of the cardinal truths in the teaching of our Lord. The Sundays in Lent are rich in their historical associations culminating as they do in Holy Week with Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, Good Friday and Easter Day as the great outstanding events in His life. Then the Sundays after Easter with the accounts of the manifestation of the Risen Lord on to Ascension Day and Whitsunday commemorating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pente-

cost. Then Trinity Sunday and the Sundays after Trinity with the lessons bearing upon the character and service of the leading apostles, will round out a series of sermons which even in a non-liturgical church will enrich and deepen the sense of historic values in our common Christian faith. Try it! If you will do it carefully and conscientiously you will thank me and you will thank God for a wholesome suggestion.

You will be much more likely to deal with life in the large if you plan for it occasionally in this more deliberate way rather than leave it to the hurriedly made choices of themes from week to week with no sort of system. All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, whether John Calvin, John Wesley or Edward Everett Hale, whether Alexander Campbell or General William Booth or the Archbishop of Canterbury! All things are yours for ye are Christ's and so were they, every man of them! All things are yours whether life or death, things present or things to come, athletics or labor unions, the love affairs of young people or the domestic troubles of the more mature, the political defeats of good citizens or the crying needs of the less fortunate elements in the community! All things are yours to study, to interpret, to illumine with the light that never was on sea or land! All things are yours to consecrate and to enroll as consenting and contributing factors in that Kingdom of God which is an everlasting and an all inclusive kingdom!

And you can, I am confident, achieve that high end all the better if you so outline and coördinate your preaching that each sermon shall not stand in complete detach-

ment from all the rest. Sermons move more strongly where they advance in columns, marching forth together like an army with banners as constituent elements in a well-ordered and wisely-directed campaign of spiritual appeal.

It may help some man if I name here a few books containing first-rate examples of this more systematic method of preaching. Washington Gladden's little book, "Who Wrote the Bible," was made up from a series of evening sermons which he preached to the people of the First Congregational Church of Columbus, Ohio, to acquaint them with better methods of Biblical study and interpretation. He thus introduced them in a constructive way to the best of that which "the higher criticism" had to offer. It all helped to place their confidence in the value of the Scriptures on foundations which stand sure.

William Burnett Wright's little book, "Master and Men," contains a series of sermons on the Beatitudes. Each sermon on a Beatitude is followed by another sermon on some character in history who seemed nobly to exemplify the particular truth contained in that text. Moses as a man possessed of that gentleness which is destined to inherit the earth! Socrates as a man who hungered and thirsted after righteousness! King Alfred as one who obtained mercy because he was merciful! Charles George Gordon, an officer in the British Army, who did not refuse to fight but bore himself in such fashion as to make peace! George Fox, a man whose pure heart enabled him to see God! It is an admirable little book. Buy it and study it! I have used my own copy of "Master and Men" until it is almost worn out; it is all marked

up and the margins are so filled with notions of my own which it started into being that it would require a skillful "Redactor" to distinguish the "original sources" from the later accretions and developments.

Charles E. Jefferson's book on "The Character of Jesus"—His sincerity, His reasonableness, His originality, His poise, His breadth, His optimism, His chivalry, His generosity, His candor, His courage, His reverence—furnishes another excellent example. Here are twenty-six evening sermons given in Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and addressed mainly to young men to awaken in them the desire to know more of the Founder and Head of the Christian church! These books all furnish worthy illustrations of the best method of setting a series of sermons in order for the sake of a deeper and more lasting impression.

The sermon may also add immeasurably to its strength by being set in a well-arranged and well-conducted order of worship. In all our non-liturgical churches the sermon is commonly regarded as the outstanding feature of the service, but it had best not stand aloof in lonely detachment from other vital elements in that hour appointed for the satisfying worship of God.

How much it means that the church has a practical monopoly of the grandest of all musical instruments! The pipe organ is ours, ours to enjoy, ours to utilize, ours to consecrate to the highest ends ever achieved by the appeal of music!

When a trained and gifted organist is seated at his console he has at his command an entire orchestra. When Harry B. Jepson, for example, sits down at the great

Newberry Organ here at Yale, he can, by intelligent registration and by the skillful use of his hands and his feet, play upon forty instruments at once. With his mighty diapasons he can fill Woolsey Hall with glorious harmony —he could fill the loftiest temple ever built. By his wise use of the string stops he can have all the violins and cellos and double basses of some splendid orchestra playing together in perfect accord. By his reed stops he can cause a congregation of listening worshipers to hear all the clarionets and the oboes blending their voices in searching appeal. By the softer tones of the salicional, the æoline, the dulciana and the vox humana, rising and falling with the opening and closing of the swell organ, he can whisper to the people messages from a world unseen as did the still, small voice of God when the prophet stood upon the mount at Horeb. If the need of the hour should be for a clarion call to duty or an imperious rebuke to spiritual sloth and self-indulgence, he can by the harsh strident tones of the trombone, the trumpet and the tuba speak as Elijah spoke that day to the false priests of a decadent faith on the slopes of Carmel.

The preacher of a message which has in it notes of appeal ranging all the way from the highest joys of heaven to the lowest depths of moral despair must develop and cultivate a sympathetic understanding and a sense of loyal coöperation with the trained musician who is there at the organ to reënforce all his own efforts in the conduct of worship.

Here is a great congregation gathering from the north and the south, from the east and the west, to spend an hour together in the House of God! They come drenched in

all the experiences, joyous and somber, ennobling and degrading, inspiring and depressing, known to the human heart. They have come, many of them at least, through the streets with careless chatter or perhaps with unkindly gossip on their lips, with an almost total lack of reverence or of aspiration in their hearts. They have come with huge and soggy masses of the "Sunday edition" stuffed into their heads. They have come with minds burdened and harassed by all the vexing and depleting problems of our modern city life. It is the high office of the organist to take them as they come in all this unpromising mental array and then by the power of this noblest of all instruments to develop in them a sense of awe, of yearning, of penitence and of aspiration before you ever undertake as a minister of worship to utter in their ears the opening words of the service.

It was my good fortune once for five months to supply the pulpit of the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City during the absence of their regular pastor. The organist at that time was Mr. Walter C. Gale, a cultured Christian gentleman and an organist in ten thousand. He knew beyond a peradventure why he was there and to what high ends he had been appointed of God. He played, as the apostle said, "with the Spirit and with the understanding also." He prayed with his fingers and with his feet, as well as with his mind and with his soul. He looked not upon the outward appearance of the score as he spread the music before him, he looked upon the inner content of all those hearts. He took those people as they came in from the street with the air of Broadway in their lungs and in their minds; and then by the power of his music he began

to soften and to mellow their hearts, to refine and to enrich their thoughts. He caused them to feel that only with clean hands and pure hearts may men ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy place. When the time came for the minister to say, "Let us pray," the people were ready! May God in heaven be blessed for the value of truly religious music here on earth!

The Roman Catholic Church has not been studying human psychology on the religious side through all these centuries without learning something about it. This church is altogether too wise to entrust its message entirely to one faculty of apprehension. It has something to say, it has much to say, to the ears of men. But it also addresses itself to their eyes. By its style of architecture it is forever saying to the careless, "The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." No one ever mistakes a well-built Roman Catholic church for a concert hall or a place to play billiards. The exterior as well as the interior of the building seems to be saying, "This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven." By painting and by sculpture, by its altar pieces and by its Stations of the Cross, by the vestments of its priests and by the robing of its acolytes, the Catholic Church is making its steady appeal through the sense of sight to the inmost recesses of the soul. It does not leave out of account even the humbler sense of smell. By the clouds of fragrant incence and by the association of ideas (which comes more surely and more strongly perhaps with the sense of smell than with any other one of the five senses) the Catholic Church attaches the habit of devotion to a certain aroma found ever in its appointed

places of prayer. It knows full well how to employ all these properties of worship in such a way as to give a suitable setting for the uttered words of its priests.

The ordinary cultus of the Protestant Church is much simpler in every way but it may well be ordered with equal discretion. You too have at your disposal certain "properties," as a stage manager would say, which can be employed most effectively in promoting the spirit of worship. You have there in your hands the greatest of all books—it is "a book of final values for all who would live nobly." There are portions of it with positive liturgical value—these can be read responsively in such a way as to enlist and organize the worshiping instincts of an entire congregation. There are outstanding passages which are veritable classics in their literary form and in their spiritual content. The Sermon on the Mount, the parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Good Samaritan, the story of the woman in Simon's house, the story of the woman at Jacob's well, and the story of the man born blind! There are high places such as the tenth and the fourteenth chapters of John, the eighth chapter of Romans and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, the heart of the letter to the Ephesians and the heart of the letter to the Philippians—all these should be read as Scripture lessons in every Christian church at least once each year.

There are the great narratives in the Old Testament! The stories of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob's struggle at Jabbok Ford, of Joseph and his brothers, of Moses, Balaam, and Joshua, of David, Solomon, and Elijah, of Naaman, Nehemiah, and Job—all these have in them perennial interest and value for the life of the race. By

a bit of judicious selecting and editing, by the omission of redundant phrases and of less significant details, any one of those great narratives may be brought within suitable compass for a morning or an evening lesson. The minister of worship who plods wearily through some entire chapter simply because his text happens to stand within its confines, without ever skipping a verse or omitting the long unpronounceable name of some obscure individual, has not as yet learned the alphabet of Scripture reading. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth!

William M. Taylor of New York told this story of a minister who had not properly learned his trade. "Some years ago a friend from the other side occupied my pulpit and read the latter half of the third chapter of Luke's Gospel which consists of the genealogy of Joseph. As he went on with the ever recurring phrase 'which was the son of' 'which was the son of' 'which was the son of' I saw a broad grin spreading over the faces of the people. When he announced his text in the words 'Adam, which was the son of God' I could see why he had chosen to read such a passage. But still the fact that his text was taken from the last entry in the table was no proper reason for reading the whole of it. The amusement of his hearers at the strangeness of the selection was an unfortunate preparation for the prayer which followed."

You may upon occasion read a composite lesson, made up of portions of Scripture taken from three or four different places in your Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New. They belong together in the unity of

the spirit and in the bond of a common purpose rather than from any accidental proximity on the printed page. Read them to your people as a veritable message from the God of love to the moral needs of mankind without stopping in each case to inform the congregation precisely where each portion of your lesson may be found. What earthly importance attaches to the fact that you are reading now from the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah beginning at the twenty-third verse, and now from some other locality equally remote from the personal knowledge of most of those to whom you are reading! Neither conscience nor taste impels one to waste time in naming such irrelevant details. Read it! Read it well! Read it without comment! What right have you "to muffle its music in the folds of your own conjectures." Read it in such fashion that the people will mark, learn, and inwardly digest the meaning of it all, and be moved to embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which there stands revealed!

How much is suggested in that Scripture passage where we read that "Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood" and "he opened the book in the sight of all the people." It was no mere physical performance. He "read in the book of the law distinctly," the record says, "and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading."

He "opened the book" as a skilled interpreter of its deeper meaning. He made clear its rich content by the very manner of his reading. He uncovered to the souls of men the divine message which lay beneath the surface of the written word by his own intelligent, sympathetic modulation. He showed its bearing upon present need

and duty. He related its age-long helpfulness to the moods and opportunities of the hour.

"He read therein from morning until mid-day . . . and the ears of all the people were attentive." He must have been a much better reader than are some of the readers of Scripture in our modern pulpits. Had he read those stately words in that pious, artificial sing-song sometimes employed by the cleric who is more conscious of his cloth than of his soul; had he read them in that strained, would-be-impressive humbug fashion sometimes heard in the pulpit; had he read them in that hard perfunctory tone, as lacking in any true sense of sympathy as the noise of a badly worn victrola, not even those devoted Hebrews who had journeyed back to the Holy City would have shown themselves "attentive from morning until mid-day."

The minister who is not able to read this Book in such a way as to enlist the attention and hold the interest of a congregation needs to be born again. Mind and voice alone, however they may be informed and trained, are never quite competent to read the Book in such a way as to "open it and to give the sense" and cause the people to hang upon it as a veritable message from the Eternal. The whole man must read. It is the heart that feels and loves and has experienced the truth there contained, which renders its possessor able to make his very reading of the Scripture a spiritual exercise. It is a high art. It is an art to be mastered both by increased attention to a wisely conceived technique and by those profounder spiritual experiences which serve to render mind and voice a more perfect medium for the conveyance of the word of God to the souls of men. Learn how to read your lessons aright

and you will have taken a long stride toward giving your sermon a suitable setting.

"If we master the meaning of the passage we intend to read in public," said R. W. Dale; "if we enter so fully into the spirit of what we are reading that the printed book vanishes and the story it tells comes to us fresh from the man who wrote it; if we read a psalm as if we ourselves had heard it as a confession of sin from the lips of David; a prophecy of Isaiah with the feeling which the words would excite if we ourselves had heard him denouncing the sins of the people and predicting the glories of God's Kingdom; a passage from Paul with that perfect sympathy with the sorrow and the anger of the Apostle in his conflict with the Judaizers; if, in short, by the exercise of imagination we place ourselves by the very side of the men who wrote the Bible, see what they saw and feel what they felt, our very reading of the Scriptures will throw an intense light on every passage." And it will also develop the right mood in the congregation for the more effective delivery of the sermon.

You have in your hands also a hymn book where the saints and the singers of all ages and of all churches have lifted up their hearts to the One God and Father of us all, praising him in the beauty of holiness! Here in a single hymnal in constant use in almost any one of our churches are "Blest be the tie that binds" and "I need Thee every hour," written by Baptists! Here are "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," and "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord," written by Episcopalians! Here are "Love Divine, all love excelling" and "Jesus, lover of my soul" written by a Methodist! Here

are "Stand up, stand up for Jesus" and "I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest" written by Presbyterians. Here are "Lead kindly light" and "Jerusalem the golden" written by Roman Catholics! Here are "A mighty Fortress is our God" and "Now thank we all our God" written by Lutherans! Here are "Nearer my God to Thee" and "In the Cross of Christ I glory" written by Unitarians! Here are "My faith looks up to Thee" and "O Master, let me walk with Thee" written by Congregationalists! Doctrinal discussion and personal preference in the matter of ritual and polity may divide us but we all come together in prayer and praise.

Now with that hymnal, as a splendid property of worship, in your hands and in the hands of all your people and with a skillful, sympathetic organist behind you who can "give out a hymn" in such a way as to awaken in every responsive heart a warm desire to sing that hymn which you have chosen in the very mood in which it was born, what a glorious chance you have to enlist that whole company of people in an act of common, corporate worship!

Sing yourself! Do it as a means of grace to your own soul! Do it also as a bit of godly example to your people. The lazy, shiftless minister who announces a hymn and then goes back to his chair and sits down while the people stand up and sing it, as if praising God were no affair of his, ought to be cast out of the synagogue. Unless he is a semi-invalid almost too weak to be there at all, he ought to be pitched out of his pulpit forthwith by some athletic deacon ordained of God as the Scripture says "to purchase to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith"

by thus exercising his authority as an officer of the church militant. "Let the people praise thee, O God! Let all the people (ministers included) praise Thee!"

Now we cannot all sing as Caruso sang, but any man who has voice enough to preach can "make a joyful noise unto the Lord." He can certainly do as much as that when several hundred other people are doing the same thing together. Let him do it then, that the Scripture may be fulfilled! This particular Scripture was written expressly for our comfort and encouragement when we are conscious of our vocal limitations and for our rebuke if we fail to use such talents as we do possess in participation in the common worship.

I have given you Scripture for it and if further confirmation is needed for my contention here it is from the master of English expression!

> "The man that hath no music in himself
> Nor is not moved by concord of sweet sounds
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night
> And his affections dark as Erebus:
> Let no such man be trusted."

You need not undertake to preach the particular sermon you have prepared for that day in every one of the three or four hymns selected for that service. You had best not. There are differences of operation in this worship of God through "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" under the immediate guidance of the same Spirit. In a single service there may well be a hymn of thanksgiving and adoration; another hymn of penitence and confession; an-

other hymn of aspiration and intercession; and then for the closing hymn a song of consecration and high resolve, embodying the particular virtue or line of action which you have emphasized that day in your sermon.

I make this appeal with some measure of insistence because I have tried out the principle I am urging upon you under varying conditions. I have preached to congregations made up of the rich and the poor, the cultured and the simple, the saintly and the sinful. I have preached to congregations of cool, unemotional New Englanders and to warm enthusiastic Southerners and to eager, restless congregations on the Pacific Coast. And when all is said and done, they were all just people, children of one Father, standing alike in open need of that great and gracious help which comes alone from Him. If you will take pains to learn how to use your hymns aright and how to use the voices of those waiting, needy people aright, you can make this office of worship a rewarding means of grace. And if you succeed in bringing it up to any kind of fair measure of its possibilities, you will have done much to achieve another worthy setting for the best sermon you will ever be able to preach.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more
> But more of reverence in us dwell
> That mind and soul according well
> May make one music as before
> But vaster."

You can invite your congregation to rise with you and utter as an act of worship their common faith by the use of one of the great historic Confessions of the Church.

How good it is to join with ancient saints, with our fellow Christians throughout the world and with one another, in affirming our belief in the everlasting verities! How much it means for a body of Christians to stand up and say to that dull, drab materialism which is the bane of so much of our modern life, "We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord! We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Author and Giver of life which is life indeed!" How much it means to say in this corporate way to that petty individualism which is too blind to recognize the strength and beauty of concerted organized effort, "We believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints!" How much it means to say to that life which crawls on the lower levels when it might be walking in high places with Him, "We believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting." "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." And the very saying of it in this worshipful manner will furnish added setting for a message from on high.

You are there as a man of prayer to lead and guide the people in their prayers. The minister of worship in the Protestant Episcopal Church has placed in his hands for daily use, "The Book of Common Prayer." It is a great title for a book—it does me good always just to see those words printed on the title page. And it is a great book—great in its comprehensiveness, great in its fine phrasing, great in its sympathetic reach inward and upward and great in the high quality of the spirit of devotion there expressed!

I have had on my desk and much of the time in my pocket for the last thirty-five years the prayer book of the Protestant Episcopal Church. I could not begin to tell you of the help I have received from it as a minister of Jesus Christ. I have used it until I know many of its beautiful Collects by heart. I have read the Litany again and again when it seemed to fit in around my own need like a well-made garment. I have read day after day, again and again, the "Order for Morning Prayer" and the "Order for Evening Prayer" and the "Prayers and Thanksgivings for Special Occasions" until they are all as familiar to me as the twenty-third psalm. We are told that the messenger of the Lord portrayed in one of the closing chapters of the Bible "had in his hand a little book open." The use of that little book of "Common Prayer," which may be held in the hand of any man open, will enrich and ennoble all his prayerful utterance.

But most of us who are here to-day have been reared and are set to serve in the non-liturgical churches. It is for us to learn how to reach out in sympathetic fashion and gather into our minds the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears, the longings and yearnings, the victories and defeats of a whole congregation of people. It is for us, closing our eyes upon all things earthly and turning our faces heavenward, to voice all that need to Almighty God in fitting words of our own choosing.

It is an august exercise. It is a privilege unspeakably precious to a man who is conscientiously engaged in the cure of souls. It is an obligation exacting beyond any other single office which the minister of religion is called upon to perform. "Prayer," as President Eliot of Har-

vard once said, "is the transcendent act of human intelligence."

We undertake to do all this in what is sometimes called with frightful accuracy "the long prayer." It had best not be too long. A man can talk with his eyes shut indefinitely. He can, if he has a fairly good command of language, keep up a flow of fervent and pious words for a quarter of an hour or more. And the people can, some of them at least, keep their heads down and their eyes shut for ten, fifteen or even twenty minutes upon occasion. It might not be profitable, however, to inquire too closely as to just what is going on in their minds, or in his, for the last two-thirds of that time. The long prayer is sometimes so long that it is no longer prayer. I am not quite sure that this last sentence could be parsed, but the sentiment, I am confident, is altogether sound.

In my earlier ministry I was once invited to deliver the address on Memorial Day in an Eastern city. The exercises were held in the Park and a large crowd had assembled. The Mayor of the city presided, a Glee Club had been engaged to sing some patriotic airs and the pastor of one of the city churches had been asked to offer the prayer. He prayed exactly eighteen minutes. I should have been loath to believe that such a thing could happen had I not been there and had I not timed him. The clock in an adjoining steeple struck the hour just as he began and when he went on indefinitely I became interested in noticing the exact time when he concluded.

This is what he did. He began with a glowing reference to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He then referred by name to the more prominent political

and military leaders in the Revolutionary War, indicating the principles which were involved in that struggle of the thirteen original colonies to be free. He then moved on in leisurely fashion, through the opening decades of our national history, to the War of 1812, showing us how those sturdy patriots went down to the sea in ships and did political business in great waters. He then came on, touching the high places in our national development here and there, to the Mexican War. This is not a period of our American History which readily lends itself to moral idealism or to religious devotion. But this man's patriotic fervor was such that like Othello's spirit of revenge, "he had stomach for them all." He stood upon the walls of Texas and showed us the towers and the battlements thereof, giving abundant thanks for the extension of our boundaries.

When he reached the war between the North and the South (it being Memorial Day) he really warmed up to his theme. He pictured the horrors of negro slavery and the iniquities involved in firing upon Fort Sumter. He showed us General Grant at the capture of Vicksburg and General Meade at Gettysburg repelling Longstreet's advance. He proclaimed the Emancipation of the slaves in the stately words of Lincoln and he went "marching through Georgia from Atlanta to the sea." Then in an eloquent peroration, he outlined the resources, the present problems and the prospects of the United States of America.

He was earnest and he was honest but you could hardly call that sort of thing prayer. It makes no difference whether the subject matter contained in the utterance is

American history or the theology of John Calvin—it is not prayer. The man began by saying, "O Lord," and he concluded by saying "Amen," but within those two far-flung boundaries, his utterance was as I have indicated. He was giving an address, when the Committee of Arrangements had invited him to offer prayer. And I fear that similar performances, not so extended perhaps, have been given on other occasions when other men have likewise forgotten what it really means to speak directly face to face with the God of all grace.

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you avoid that sort of thing, first, last and all the time, just as you would avoid profane swearing. It belongs almost in the same category—it seems to many thoughtful people like taking the name of God in vain. If you are to "lead in prayer," as we say in our familiar but exacting phrase, you will need to keep in mind steadily and genuinely the nature and meaning of the august exercise in which you are engaged. You must pray with the Spirit and with the understanding also. The tones of your voice must be reverent and real. The language in which you clothe your petitions must of necessity be simple, direct and chaste. The least touch of that which borders on the flippant or the frivolous; the use of phrases which have been cheapened and coarsened by unworthy associations; the perfunctory utterance of words which have become hackneyed and meaningless, will banish that mood of devotion in which alone the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man can avail what God meant it to avail. If you have any sort of just sense of what you are there to do you will find yourself saying to Him a thousand times during the

first year of your ministry what the disciples said of old, "Lord, teach us to pray."

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut the door." The Master was not defining a physical act. He was not concerned about the place where a man should pray but only as to the spirit in which it should be done. Let the prayer you offer be a simple, direct, and genuine transaction between your own soul and God! The minister standing in the presence of a great congregation may nevertheless by the concentration of mind and soul, by his utter absorption in the high task in which he is engaged, enter into his closet and shut the door. He is there alone with his Maker because his prayer is offered directly and genuinely to God.

The enterprising reporter on a Boston paper, sharing in that deep-seated and oft-remarked local pride, referred, in his account of a religious convention, to the lengthy invocation as "one of the most eloquent prayers ever offered to a Boston audience." He may have builded better than he knew. Many an audience (and congregation, alas) has had eloquent prayers offered to it in such showy fashion as to banish entirely the spirit of devotion.

I know of no human exercise so difficult and so exacting, which so takes it out of a man, as the act of praying in the presence of a congregation. If the minister can take upon his heart in sympathetic fashion the needs of all those people and carry them up in well chosen words by his own vital faith into the presence of God with a genuine and sustained sense of the sacred nature of what he is doing—if he can do that and keep it up for five or six minutes he has done well. The moment he loses that sense

of sympathetic, horizontal touch with the needs of his fellows or the vital sense of a perpendicular hold upon God, he would better say "Amen" and stop. It will not avail anything for him to keep on talking (even though he talks in pious fashion) for ten minutes more when he has really ceased to pray.

Hear this testimony from Henry Ward Beecher! "I can bear this witness that never in the study in the most absorbed moments, never in those chance inspirations that everybody is subject to, never in any company where friends are the sweetest and dearest, never in any circumstances in life, is there anything that is to me so touching as when I stand in ordinary good health before my great congregation to pray for them. Hundreds of times as I rose to pray and glanced at the congregation, I could not keep back the tears. There came to my mind such a sense of their wants, there were so many hidden sorrows, so many weights and burdens, so many doubts and dangers, so many states of weakness! I had such a sense of compassion for them, that it seemed to me as if I could hardly open my mouth to speak. When I take my people and carry them before God to plead for them . . . there is no time that Jesus is so crowned with glory, no time when I get so far into heaven as then. I forget the body, I live in the spirit. It seems as if God permitted me to lay my hand on the very Tree of Life and shake down from it both leaves and fruit for the healing of my people."

I am sure that much of our praying in public is altogether too mystical and too theological for human nature's Sunday food. It moves in a realm where only men with college and seminary degrees are accustomed to enter

freely. It clothes itself in language which unordained people never think of putting on. The man who introduces into his prayer, or for that matter into his sermon, such terms as regenerative and propitiatory, anthropomorphic and cataclysmic, needs to have a heart to heart talk with some plain old farmer who could tell him a few things which would be for his profit. It may be presumed that the Lord to whom the prayer is offered fully understands such terms, but it may be assumed with equal assurance that many of the people for whose benefit mainly the prayer is being offered do not understand any one of them.

"After this manner pray ye"—not always in just those words naturally, but let the Lord's Prayer indicate to you the general scope and method of your public devotions! There are no technical terms in the Lord's Prayer. There is not a line of theological or philosophical patois in it from start to finish. This is not the only reason, but it is one reason why the common people hear it and use it gladly. Use not vain repetitions and rhetorical flourishes as the heathen do. In all your public prayers, let your yea be yea and your nay, nay.

Pray for the most part in concrete terms! Let your thanksgiving and your adoration, your confession and your intercession have in them steadily the accents of daily life. Pray for the boys and girls—some of them, thank heaven, will be present at the service of worship and more of them would be present if we were only wiser in our mode of conducting it. Speak of them as "boys and girls" rather than as "children." When a boy has gotten out of knee breeches into long trousers he does not

like the idea of being classified as "children." Have regard to this budding preference if you would hold the interest and win the heart of the boy.

Pray for the fathers and mothers—their hearts are hungry for help in their sacred office and the hearts of all sons and daughters who are present will go with you in that gracious petition. Pray for those who are sick or in sorrow—there is a vast amount of pain and grief lying in close relation to any number of those people there before you. Pray for the physicians and nurses that they may be wise and skillful, that they may be thoughtful and tender in their ministry of healing! Pray for those who preach the gospel and for those who sing it and for those who hear it. Your brother ministers, your choir, and all who hope for profit from the service of the hour, will be grateful for such a request on their behalf.

Pray for the public school teachers—they are set for the rising or falling of many as they engage in their vital task of forming and maturing personality in all those young candidates for human existence. The teachers themselves will be helped by your prayer and the boys and girls who are not eager to be educated when they go to school, who are accustomed to look upon the teacher as the common enemy, may, after having walked in that thick darkness, see a great light.

Pray for the public officials of your city, your state, your nation—not always for the same officials in the same set of words every Sunday in the year, but let your prayer reveal the fact that you feel that "the powers that be are ordained of God" for certain high ends of order and justice and that you would invoke upon them a higher con-

secration. Pray for employers that they may be just, wise, and humane in their use of the five talents of organizing and administrative ability which God has given them, remembering all the while that they too have a Master in Heaven. Pray for those who toil mainly with their hands that whatsoever they are set to do, they may do it well, not as time-servers, wage-getters or men-pleasers but heartily as unto the Lord.

Pray for the soldiers, the sailors, the policemen—they are out at the edge doing those necessary things which belong to the security of so many of our valued interests. Pray for the tempted and the discouraged, the puzzled, and the burdened—they are all there before you waiting for that friendly lift of your sympathy and of your faithful petition on their behalf. You can help them to reach up to the final source of all our help.

Pray for the strangers who are present, who have never prayed in that place before! Ask that this first prayer which they are offering now may bring to their waiting hearts an answer of peace. If some of them have not been praying up to that point but merely listening to you, or perhaps thinking of something else, that request of yours reaching out after them in personal fashion as well as Godward, may bring them in and you will know that they too are there beside you on their knees before the Throne of Grace. Pray for those who travel by land or by sea, that God may give them safe conduct and bring them to the desired place with a fresh sense of gratitude for all His goodness.

You can well afford to pray frequently for these various forms of human need which are altogether familiar. The

man who is forever striving to get out of the beaten track in his devotions, who is so eager to say something fresh and original to the Lord Sunday after Sunday, is very likely to find himself walking alone. The "beaten path" became beaten because so many heavy-hearted people have walked and are even now walking there. The very bareness of the beaten track is its glory.

If your head and your heart are actually among the stars when you pray, you can afford to keep your feet firmly on the ground as you take up in simple, homely fashion, one after another, from week to week, these many and varied earthly needs. Let the profound devotion, the heavenward reach and grasp of your prayer be in your tone of voice and in the spirit which breathes through your petitions! Then make the language and the objects of your requests as simple and natural as you know how to make them. If a son ask his father for bread or fish or an egg—the plain ordinary staples which meet our everyday need—he will not be sent away with a stone.

Here then are the main factors in that service of worship in our non-liturgical churches which are to furnish a worthy setting for the message you bring from your Father in Heaven to the souls of those people for whom you are to give account! If you and your organist, your choir and your congregation, can order and render the music aright: if you will learn how to read your Bible in the ears of men and how to lead them in their approach to God by your honest and faithful prayer, you will find that by the time you reach the utterance of your sermon a favoring atmosphere will have been created in the church. The very air of the place will "nimbly and sweetly recom-

mend itself" to the high task to be performed. Those truths of yours will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run upon the errands for which God has sent them and not grow weary; they will move in and out among the pews and among the needs of all those people there before you, and not faint.

VIII

THE SOUL OF THE SERMON

IN the preceding lectures I have been dwelling on the choice of texts and the writing of introductions, on the assembling of material and the development of plans, on the art of expression and the mode of delivery, as if *you* had to do it all. But all this detailed preparation, taken by itself, is mere dust of the ground. It has little worth until the Spirit of the Lord shall move upon the face of it and breathe into it the breath of his own mighty life, bestowing upon your sermon a living soul.

The preaching of a real sermon is no mere human transaction. In the very nature of the case, it cannot be. There are at least three living factors involved in it—the preacher himself, the people who listen, and the Spirit of Him who has all those higher values which are involved in the process, within his holy keeping. The prophets and apostles spake of old "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" and the same high privilege, according to the proportion of our faith, is open to each one of us.

We are none of us unmindful of the fact that this other and higher form of energy is to be reckoned with steadily. There are psychic forces at work in every preaching service which operate quite independently of the will of the preacher. They operate upon the minds and hearts of the people who listen. They operate also upon the mind and heart of the man who speaks. The divine impinges

all the while upon the human. Whether it is there for furtherance and aid, or for opposition and hindrance, depends entirely upon the quality and the attitude of the human. But in any event it is there.

"Work out your own salvation" then as preachers. Work with all your might, as if everything depended upon you. Yet all the while, know full well that unless God is working within you to will and to accomplish His good pleasure, your preaching will be vain. Work as if you had to do it all! Then pray and trust as if God had to do it all. You will find that the correlation of those two sets of forces will make your preaching spiritually effective.

The same blending of energies, human and divine, though less apparent in many other fields, is present everywhere. If a man is farming, he may plant and his associate may water—this is all they can do—God gives the increase. When men plow and plant with all possible skill and fidelity, they are still profoundly conscious of their utter dependence upon the latent energies of the soil and the sunshine, the rain and the dew. One reason perhaps why country-bred boys, other things being equal, make the best preachers is because they have had their feet in the soil. They have been constantly in touch with living, growing things. They have been schooled in the fine art of coöperation with those energies which are beyond all human control.

"The earth is given to the children of men," the psalmist said, "but the heavens are the Lord's." You may sometimes see a plant trying to grow under a shed. It has soil enough—it has eight thousand perpendicular

miles of earth, more or less, directly under it. It may have water enough, for some man may pour a bucketful of water upon it every morning. It may be that the hindering weeds have all been removed, allowing it a complete monopoly of its bit of soil. But still it does not grow. It does not grow because it needs the open sky, the sunshine, the rain and the dew that it may indeed come to its own best and utter itself in some splendid flower. It has the earth and all that the children of men can do on its behalf, but it needs also the heavens which are the Lord's.

You cannot preach under a shed. If your own quality of inner life, your own lack of trust in spiritual forces, your own careless indifference to those lines of spiritual culture which mean steady, vital fellowship with the Unseen, are such that you are roofed in, then your preaching will be feeble. It will be for all the world like one of those yellow, sickly-looking, potato vines growing in the cellar. You need both the common earth and the open sky for the complete effectiveness of your work as preachers of a divine Gospel.

The recognition of the necessity for this coöperation with an unseen world is clearly brought out in those words from Deuteronomy; "The land ye go to possess is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowest thy seed and waterest it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs." In the Nile Valley the utilization of the annual overflow of the great River for the irrigating of the fields, enabled the farmers to have practically all of the elements of agricultural success under their own control. They sowed their seed and then with bared feet they pumped the water from the River and made tiny chan-

nels for it to irrigate the growing grain. In Egypt the farmers did not feel the sense of an immediate dependence upon the upper world.

"But the land thou goest in to possess, is a land of hills and of valleys"—where irrigation would be difficult if not impossible: " a land that drinketh water of the rain of Heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; and the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year." The steady dependence of the farmer in Palestine upon that upper world from which the land must drink water from the rain of heaven in order to become fertile, developed in him a profound sense of reliance upon the unseen energies of the Lord.

Your own land of promise as preachers of the Gospel is "a land of hills and of valleys." It is a land that drinketh water of the rain of Heaven. If it fails to draw its supplies from above, it soon dries up. The ensuing drought destroys all the spiritual harvests you are sent to produce. It is a land which the Lord thy God careth for and the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it from the beginning of your task even unto the end of it.

In order to secure this superhuman aid it is not enough that the minister should merely live a decent, respectable, upright life. This is to be taken for granted. And such a mode of life in the ministry is all but universal, for the clergyman knows full well that lying, stealing, uncleanness, or any other coarse, moral lapse would end him. The ministers of Christ are very rarely overtaken by the coarse sins of the flesh. It is not enough that a minister should

merely keep up the outward habits of devotion—this also may be taken for granted. The preacher of a divine Gospel must so live as to keep alive and sensitive within his own soul that sense of steady coöperation with the Unseen.

Rubinstein used to say that if he stopped practicing for one day, he noticed it in his playing. If he stopped for a week his intimate friends noticed it. If he stopped for a month the public noticed it. The subtle, nervous reactions which were needed if he would take the notes on the score in the piece of music before him, and utter them worthily through those ivory keys, were dependent upon that steady practice which kept him in condition.

What of the man who looks upon the realities of the spiritual world and undertakes to utter them? If he becomes spiritually indifferent for a day, he will notice it in his preaching—he will if he is morally sensitive and sternly honest with himself. If he is careless for a week, his wife and his deacons will miss something. If he is careless for a month, the outside world will feel the absence of that subtle, commanding accent which belongs to spiritual veracity, to religious genuineness. If you propose to preach, you will have to be the real thing. No shams, no make-believes, no perfunctory machines need apply.

The young men in the ministry might just as well realize at the start what they are in for. The work of preaching is the most exacting task on earth. It lays under commission all the best powers of body, mind and spirit. It loads men with burdens not easy to be borne. If we were not steadily reinforced and empowered from an inexhaustible source of spiritual energy, we would

all of us despair of maintaining any sort of genuine efficiency in such a high calling.

In your regular work, week after week, you are called upon as your Master was before you, to see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on their errands of spiritual ministry. You are expected to live in constant communication with that unseen world, where the messengers of the Most High are coming and going upon those august transactions which have to do with the renewing, the maturing, and the enrichment of spiritual life. You therefore must of necessity, beyond all other men, have an open vision and a clear, definite sense of your own coöperation with that upper world of unseen forces.

It is the divine element in preaching which makes it vital. In the words of Nathaniel J. Burton, "The sermon gets to be a sermon, and is saved from being a lecture, by being made and delivered in the Holy Ghost." The older Methodist preachers, who formerly traveled their circuits, upon reaching one of their appointments would often go out behind the church among the trees and pray, as they said, "for the power." We can trace more accurately than they did perhaps the underlying psychological principles governing the experience they sought. But however we may phrase it, the spiritual effort put forth by those men in seeking "the power" gave them the sense of an effective fellowship with the divine. When Frederick Denison Maurice preached in London to a congregation where the educated and the cultured touched elbows with the simple, working people, the universal testimony was that there was throughout the service "the

sense of something which was not of this world." It was that mysterious "something" which gave the service its power of spiritual appeal.

You will naturally remember how the importance of seeking the coöperation of this divine element in preaching is urged upon the servants of Christ in the New Testament. "Ye shall receive power,"—*dunamis,* dynamic, dynamite, tremendous and mysterious energy! Ye shall receive tremendous and mysterious energy "after the Holy Spirit has come upon you." "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," in the place of your former attachment and devotion, "until ye are endued with power," that is to say dynamic, "from on high." "My speech and my preaching was not in the enticing words of man's wisdom," Paul said, "but in demonstration of the spirit and of power"—in demonstration of spiritual dynamic. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power,"—the dynamite,—"of God, unto salvation unto every one who believes." "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind,"—energy, intelligence, and character,—"that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power" (in the dynamic) "of God." It is this dynamic aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit, a power infinite in its possibilities which makes the profoundest appeal to the human heart.

One great office of preaching is to permit, to encourage and to aid the functioning and the energizing of the divine Spirit, both within the soul of the man who speaks and within the souls of those who hear. When this process

is in operation, we have preaching. Nothing less than that is preaching. Men will come, "to hear you preach," as they say. That may completely describe the mood in which they come. But if you do your work well, before you are through, they will see no man, neither you nor any other man, but Jesus only. You can only accomplish that result as you become conscious yourself of the divine Spirit present and energetic in all your work.

This divine element is your distinctive asset. If you try to compete with the writers of editorials in the newspapers or with the magazine writers, in clever literary production, they will beat you. They have more leisure than you can possibly have as an active pastor. They do not undertake to produce in any one week as much as would be found in two good sermons. There is open to them a wider range of topics for suggestive treatment. They may write on religion also if they choose and on every other conceivable thing under the sun. You cannot successfully run races with them in furnishing popular literature.

If you undertake to compete with the theater or with the vaudeville show, or the moving pictures in furnishing entertainment, you will be left behind. The amusement venders have vast amounts of money to spend. They have been studying this entertainment business for years while you were studying your Bible, your church history and all the rest. Their mastery of that subject will make your knowledge of it seem like the crude notions of an amateur. They have all the appliances known to modern science. There is a wide range of activity open to them,

permissible in the theater, but not in the place of worship. You cannot in your sermons compete with them in furnishing people with entertainment.

If you undertake to run races with the lecture platform in giving intellectual shows, you will be worsted. The popular lecturer is at liberty to put all he knows into one lecture if he chooses and then deliver it a hundred or a thousand times as opportunity offers, until he has brought it to the highest state of perfection in literary style and in forcible delivery of which he may be capable. You cannot do that with the steady demand made upon you that you should preach twice every week in the same church.

If you undertake to compete with the authors of books, they will surpass you in sound knowledge and in well-reasoned statement. The author of a book may take five years or ten years to produce a single volume, while the moment you have pronounced the benediction on Sunday night you feel almost compelled to hurry back to your study to prepare two more sermons for next Sunday.

In your own congregation there will be men who are your equals, and in all probability your superiors, in many lines of knowledge. The business men will know more about business than you do. The scientific men will understand the methods and findings of modern science as you do not. The politicians will understand all the moves and gestures in that game more thoroughly than you do. You cannot possibly instruct those men in their own specialties.

And as a matter of fact, those men do not come to your church for instruction in Economics or in Biology or in

Civics. They are disappointed when you undertake to palm off on them an inadequate presentation of their own specialties. The President of the University of California, some years ago, was an accomplished Greek scholar long before he went to Berkeley. He was accustomed to read the orations of Demosthenes and the plays of Æschylus in the original as a pastime. He attended habitually one of the churches in that University town. He had for his pastor at one time a minister who sometimes undertook to air his Greek in the presence of this past master of the Greek language. And the result was that at all such times the poor parson utterly failed to furnish the college president what he most desired to receive in coming to church.

You are not there primarily to impart larger stores of learning to men touching their own particular lines of interest. You are not there to repeat some lesson which you may have learned out of a book. You are there chiefly to impart spiritual life. Your sermon if it is really worthy of being preached has grown in direct fashion out of your own spiritual life. If you are preaching on faith, you preach as a man who cherishes faith himself and has put it to the test on a score of hard fields. If you preach on hope, you preach as a man who is "saved by hope." If you discourse upon love, you do it out of a heart honestly controlled by love for God and for man. If you are proclaiming reconciliation to God through Christ, you do it as a man who has himself been reconciled and has found that peace which transcends all human understanding. If you speak of moral renewal, you do it from your own deep sense of that process already begun

and in process of completion in the depths of your own soul. When you preach on temptation and the way of escape, it is the word of a man who has fought the wild beasts at Ephesus and vanquished them through grace given him from on high.

Here you will find the hidings of your power! Here you will discover your main field of usefulness! The more you can speak out of the abundance of the heart, the more surely will your message find its way to the hearts of other men. Herein lies that essential soul of every sermon which lifts it out of the category of an academic performance and makes of it a spiritual exercise. Your truths are not dealt with after the method of the learned disquisition but as experiences to be imparted in words which are "spirit and life."

When you enter your pulpit you are there to make people feel the presence of God. And here you have a field all to yourself, with little or no competition. The newspapers and the theaters, the popular lectures and the larger part of the books men read, do not undertake to make people immediately conscious of the presence of God. They do not have as their main office the direct impartation of spiritual life.

In undertaking this high office you do not think of yourself then primarily as a lecturer on theology or even upon religion. Men do not send for the doctor to come and tell them all he knows about anatomy or materia medica. They want him to come and set the broken bone or to carry the patient through some serious illness. And you regard yourself as one commissioned to bring the people into such relations with the healing agencies that have

to do with spiritual health that they will be steadily getting better under your treatment. You do not try to tell them how much you know, but to impart life and to put them in touch with the source of life. This ability is your best asset, I repeat, and it can only result from real and constant transactions between you and your Lord.

There is no other element in preaching which can show such a measure of demonstrated efficiency as the presence of this spiritual quality. It gets results. It gets real results and lasting results. The style of speech which never goes beyond a certain pleasing and popular form of eloquence may be utterly devoid of any character-making influence. Moses was not an orator—he was "slow of speech," he said, and had a clumsy tongue. Aaron was an orator. He was a silver-tongued orator, a spell-binder, a fine public speaker. But Moses received the word of the Lord and wrote it on the face of Israel's life to stay, while Aaron, the silver-tongued orator, merely made a golden calf and caused the people to worship that popular idol to their own hurt.

When I was a pastor in Boston there was a minister in one of the churches there whose name was Brooke Hereford. He was an Englishman, with all the quiet dignity of the English clergy. There was no more of sensation in his methods than there was about Bunker Hill Monument. He was simple as a child in his mode of speech. He was a man who was almost shy in manner, yet with a warm heart hidden away under that reserve. But his church was always full and when he preached at Harvard University, more students came to see him during his

consultation hours than came to see any other one preacher, with the single exception of Phillips Brooks. I talked once with a traveling man, who was thoroughly worldly and careless in his own speech and mode of living. He told me that whenever he had a Sunday in Boston he always made it a point to hear Brooke Hereford. I asked him why he enjoyed going there. His reply was, "Well, I hardly know—perhaps it is because he is so reverent and so real in his religion. It does me good for weeks just to have heard him pray."

The presence or the absence of that divine "something" really determines the question of spiritual efficiency. The autobiography of President Charles G. Finney of Oberlin is as plain as homespun in its literary quality but in its inspirational quality it is a book in a thousand. I made it a practice to read it through regularly once every year for the first fifteen years of my own ministry. And each reading sent me back to my task with a new measure of spiritual passion burning hot within me. He was so conscious of this divine enduement that when he uttered his message "his words seemed literally to cut like knives" as they fell upon the consciences of those who heard. Strong men were moved there in their pews, without any of the machinery of the modern revival, to cry out for the divine mercy to relieve their burdened and guilty hearts.

President Finney was a man meager in his own emotional life. His training as a lawyer had made him severely plain and logical in his mode of stating truth. He employed, as we know from his published sermons and lectures, scarcely any of the beauties of literary expres-

sion. But he was a man who preached the Gospel of Christ in the power of the divine Spirit.

And to this day the wholesome effects of those great revivals of religion which he conducted can be read as from an open book in the higher life of whole communities in Western New York and in Pennsylvania and in that part of Ohio known as the Western Reserve. His sermon showed a body of truth, simple and rugged as a rule, but real—the power of it lay in the fact that it was possessed by a living soul through the divine inbreathing.

Would that a double portion of the spirit of that modern Elijah, now caught up to heaven, might be upon all the young Elishas! It would equip them as nothing else can for the high and hard tasks awaiting them in this hurried, intricate, baffling life which they are sent to possess in the name of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts.

If you seek and secure this divine enduement of power you will rejoice in your work. In the long run now as then the joy of the Lord must be your strength. If your preaching is a burden to you; if you are doing it because you must do something in order to live; or if your work is done in a mechanical sort of way much as a man might get out fence posts, or cut cord wood; or if you are preaching mainly because you find a certain intellectual satisfaction in standing in a public place, the admired of all beholders, then you will fail. And you ought to fail. You cannot succeed except as your heart is joyfully set upon the deeper, spiritual values bound up with this work of preaching.

May you learn to preach as the birds sing! They cannot help it. They are so chock full of music clear up to

their throats that if they did not sing, they would burst. You ought to reach the point where you will utter those visions and dreams of better things, those insights of yours into human need and those broad, rich sympathies with all who fail, those experiences wherein you laid firm hold of God's grace for your own eternal salvation, simply because, like Luther of old, you cannot otherwise. You feel the deep joy of it walking and leaping and praising God in your own soul until like the lame man who was healed you must enter into the temple and utter it for the help of your fellow beings.

In the city and in the country alike, you will find great masses of human life, sordid, narrow, stupid, mean. If you yourself were sordid and narrow, stupid and mean, you would have nothing for those poor lives thus caught and held. But you have been apprehended, seized upon, caught up, ennobled by Christ Jesus so that you have something for them—something which is literally priceless. By the power of what you have seen and felt, by the power of what you are able to declare in the Lord, you are made competent to transform those masses of life, until they become radiant tabernacles of the Spirit.

You are sent to do what the great poets do for us all. They dream for us and they sing for us. They gather up the plain materials of our lives and make them glorious by the profounder interpretations they put upon them. They cause these ordinary experiences of human life to shine like the sun in his strength by the finer meanings they infuse into them. You are to do just that for the working, struggling, burdened and ofttimes defeated peo-

ple, by the finer interpretations you place upon the commonplace activities of everyday life.

"Fill the waterpots with water," Jesus said to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. "And they filled them to the brim." It was a commonplace service they rendered—any one could have done it, any one who had feet and hands. But when these servants did it at his word and under his eye, and did it thoroughly, filling the waterpots to the brim, that commonplace action at once took on a higher meaning and a richer value.

The unnamed, unknown servants were making wine for the wedding. They were saving a bride and her parents from the mortification consequent upon such a disaster as having the refreshments give out at her marriage. They were adding such pleasure to the occasion that the ruler of the feast declared that he had never tasted such joy before. And they were also enabling the Master to so "manifest his glory" that "his disciples believed on him." They had believed on him before for they were already "his disciples," but in the joy of that occasion their belief grew rich and glad. You in turn must learn how to change the water of humdrum activity into wine, how to lift the prose of ordinary experience into the poetry of spiritual achievement.

In order to do this, you will need every now and then to step back from your work for an hour that you may see it aright. It is what the painter is constantly doing. He moves back from his canvas so that he may see, not dabs of paint which is all that any one can see when his eyes are close to the picture—he moves away that he may see the vision of beauty which filled his soul taking shape

there on his easel. Step back from your task that you may see it in its true perspective! Step back that you may see it in all its relations perpendicular as well as horizontal. Step back and recognize those deeper implications which are hidden away beneath the surface.

You will inevitably find in your ministry a great deal of routine and monotony. You will feel many a time and for days together that you are only an obscure servant filling waterpots with water and when they are empty filling them over again. Human life taken in the large is very much like that. It is lived for the most part on "Main Street" rather than upon "The Avenue." The housekeeper makes up beds which have already been made up a hundred times and they will all have to be made up again to-morrow morning. She washes dishes which have already been washed a thousand times and most of them will have to be washed again after the next meal. The business man goes down to his store to discuss sales and figure on contracts and write letters, the same sort of sales, contracts and letters to which he has been giving attention for years. The teacher enters her school room and faces forty more restless urchins, the same sort of urchins she has been facing ever since she was elected to her present position, as unresponsive and intractable oftentimes as a lot of wild cats. The minister goes into his study to prepare two more sermons for next Sunday—he has been busy for the last twenty years "getting ready for next Sunday" and here he is doing it again! And when he stands up to preach, he is conscious that seventy-five thousand other ministers in this broad land are doing the same thing in much the same way.

We are all like the little switch engines down here in the freight yard. We are never hitched up to the "Overland Limited" to draw it swiftly and surely across the Continent until it lands its passengers at the Golden Gate. We are simply puffing to and fro within the limits of a narrow yard, doing those plain things which somebody has to do if the great common traffic of human existence is to be carried along. But when we perform our tasks at the command of Christ, when we link them up with that purpose of His which reaches from the hour when the morning stars sang together on to the hour when a multitude which no man can number will drink their wine new with Him in the kingdom of God, we manifest His glory so that the world believes on Him. And that sublime result is not commonplace.

But you cannot do this, you cannot begin to do it, without a profound and constant knowledge of spiritual reality at first hand. The strong tides of your own spiritual life setting steadily in a given direction must carry you and your sermon on your way rejoicing as you minister efficiently to the souls of those men who are of necessity steadily engaged in doing these humdrum, commonplace things.

What you think about when your mind is free to do, not what it must, but what it likes; what your heart is, in its prevailing moods when it is unleashed to go where it will; what your prevailing temper is when you are under no sort of compulsion laid on from without, this will determine what you will be able to accomplish by that natural flowering forth of your own inner being, which we call preaching.

Your supreme concern then in the pulpit will not be

your sermon but the souls of your people. You will not enter your pulpit saying to yourself, "Go to, now! Let us make great sermons." You will reach back for that primeval intention, that universal purpose which underlies all our ministry. You will say, "Let us make men in His image, after His likeness." Then in that high mood and by the strength of that fundamental, commanding purpose you will enter upon the high level of direct spiritual impartation as the preacher of a divine Gospel.

"He shall show you a large upper room, furnished, there make ready." Here is a divine finger pointing straight toward the higher levels of experience which are imperatively demanded if we are to find ourselves fitted for those exacting duties just ahead of us.

"A large upper room, furnished—there make ready." It is a room away from the noise and dust of the busy street. It is a room beyond the touch and defilement of those methods which are of the earth, earthy. It is a room lifted above the adjacent structures, giving it a freer, wider outlook upon the broad areas of human interest. It is a room fronting squarely on the blue sky, inviting the direct rays of the sun and opening its windows wide to all the forces of that upper air. He will show you this as the crowning opportunity for your own personal preparation as preachers. Enter it and there make ready for those high privileges which await you.

Have you been reading, I wonder, the accounts of the heroic achievement of some of the younger astronomers in recent years? These men were not content to walk the streets and look up at the stars on clear nights as the rest of us were doing. They journeyed to those regions

where the crust of Mother Earth has been thrust high into the upper air, fourteen, fifteen, eighteen thousand feet above sea level. They climbed high up on Chimborazo in South America. They ascended to the very summit of Mount Blanc, carrying and dragging their instruments with them, one of those instruments weighing eleven hundred pounds. While on these expeditions they slept in thin silk tents which they carried along. They thawed out frozen food on little alcohol stoves until it was soft enough to be eaten. They endured all manner of exposure and hardship on those rugged steeps and in that frigid climate in order to accomplish the high ends they had in view.

These young astronomers made these heroic and perilous ascents that from those vantage points they might the better scan the visible heavens. They desired to map out the paths the wandering planets take. They undertook to weigh the huge bulk of those distant suns. They actually determined by their spectrum analysis the very fuel those distant planets burned. And they were able to make these observations, some of which were of great value to science, because they were willing to pay the price of ascent into those upper rooms.

They must have known all the while that the knowledge gained and the very objects of their research all belong to that order which passeth away. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork," yet only for a few brief hours in cosmic history. The heavenly bodies are all awaiting that elemental change to which they are destined.

But what shall we say of the high privilege and exacting obligations spread out before us as the intrepid

explorers of the world of spiritual realities? It lies within the power of every man of us to go aloft into that upper world where with the eye of faith we may see the eternal verities. We may know the movements of the Divine Spirit in His stately goings from one end of the heaven even unto the other end thereof. We may possess and weigh those unseen values which are priceless. We may look with unveiled face upon all the hues and tints which burn in the glories of that upper world until our very souls are changed into the same image. "He shall show you a large upper room, furnished—there, make ready."

There are men of quite ordinary gifts who become highly effective by the larger measure of this divine element in their preaching. This fact affords us immense encouragement. In the matter of brains and ideas we are all conscious of our limitations—if unhappily we are not conscious of them then our friends become all the more conscious of them for us—and it is a limitation which cannot be entirely remedied. We would all be glad to be possessed of more ease of manner, of more facility of expression, of more grace and force in delivery. We can do something by way of improving our original stock of these fine qualities, but the gifts we receive at birth, when "the gates of the gods," as the ancients said, "are closed on each man," decide for us, in the main, the measure of our unaided effectiveness.

But no one of us need be straitened in that which is vastly more important. In our access to God we have all the privileges ever enjoyed by any man. You will be just as near the stars in some modest rural parish as you would be if you were standing in the pulpit of some Fifth

Avenue Church, New York, or in City Temple, London. In that infilling of our spiritual receptacles from His infinite supply, we need never be cramped. The gate of the living God remains forever open in this matter of spiritual enduement. We can, if we will, grow steadily and endlessly in human sympathy and in spiritual experience—and this will put soul into our preaching beyond any other line of effort to be named.

You will find that in the number of conversions made, in the range and power of your inspirational appeal, in the measure of comfort and help afforded to your people, and even in the sheer attractiveness you may exhibit as a popular preacher, there is no other one asset which will bear comparison for a moment with the sense of this divine element operating in all your work.

How shall this quality of spiritual effectiveness be gained and kept? I wish with all my heart that in definite terms I could tell you. If I were actually able to set it before you in finished phrase, my reputation as a theological instructor would be made for all time. If I could give you rules on which you could rely as men rely upon chemical formulas when they are at work in the laboratory, I should wake up to-morrow morning and find myself famous.

The giving or the withholding of divine help in public address involves about the greatest mystery of which I know anything in my own personal experience. I have read all the books on the subject which I could command. I have talked repeatedly with many wise, experienced, and efficient ministers of Christ. I have been trying all the valid methods I could discover on myself for thirty

odd years, and still I find myself baffled. There is a sense of mystery attaching to this matter of spiritual enduement, which I am unable to solve.

If your experience has been anything like mine, you will have observed this: On one occasion when I had made careful, thorough, painstaking preparation, when I had been living conscientiously, when I had prayed for the effectiveness of that sermon with unusual fervor, when I had a theme which filled my heart with joy, I still made a failure! The message I brought seemed ineffective and the hearts of men were unmoved. On some other occasion when I was not nearly so well prepared, when I had not behaved myself the week before in all respects as a Christian minister should, when there had been a lack of prayer, and no such measure of deep feeling, I spoke with great personal liberty and (according to the grateful testimony of those who heard) with genuine spiritual effectiveness. In the one case I was becalmed and the whole sermon was dull, lifeless, dead. In the other case there came a breeze from Heaven which swept me along grandly and brought the whole congregation toward the desired haven.

It seems as uncertain as the wind. And this was the very illustration which Jesus used. He said to Nicodemus that unless a man was born anew, born from above, born from within, he could not enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus was amazed by this statement. It staggered him. "How can these things be?" he exclaimed! "How can a man be born when he is old?" Just then the wind rustled the leaves where the two men stood; and Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh

or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

We cannot tell how it is that the wind blows one day from the north and we have cold, and another day from the south and we have heat, and another day from the east and we have rain. We know the fact but we cannot explain the method. We cannot tell how the wind fits in with all the other forces and movements of this universe. And the same vast sense of mystery inheres in the action and movement of the Divine Spirit. "Religion is itself an invisible and intangible object best discovered as the wind and the Spirit generally are discovered, in what they move."

The utilization of divine help in preaching has not been reduced to anything like an exact science. We are dealing with realities too vast for complete formulation. Both our words and our methods are "thrown out," as it were, at these immensities which elude final, exhaustive statement or treatment.

Here, however, is the best that I have found in this matter. You can keep your hearts pure and your souls responsive by living true, kind, devout lives. You can avoid those tempers and dispositions which harden and stiffen men, making them unresponsive to the Divine Spirit. You can keep your own inner life as delicately sensitive as the flesh of a child, so that you will feel the softest breezes of Heaven when they blow your way.

You can pray until the veil which separates you from the world of spiritual reality becomes thin. Your own devotions may be so genuine that there will be no sense of a dull, heavy barrier between you and the Most High.

You will feel the direct impact of that unseen world upon your own heart. You cannot achieve this result by an occasional spasmodic fit of earnestness or by the special prayer you offer in hurried preparation for some critical occasion. You can only achieve it by a life of prayer.

You can practice meditation upon high themes. "While I was musing, the fire burned." The direct relation of mental reflection to moral enthusiasm is well understood by competent psychologists. It was well understood by the psalmist of old. It is well understood by all successful teachers.

It was Madame Montessori who said "Meditation means something growing within. Take the difference between reading and meditating! We may read a popular novel in a single night. We may meditate upon a single verse of Scripture for an entire hour. When we read the novel in a night, it is like a wind that passes over arid ground. There is a squandering of the physical powers. But the one who meditates, assimilates in a manner that surprises himself, because he feels something unforeseen coming to life within him." When you take your theme apart and meditate upon it, there will be developed within your very soul that eagerness to impart the best that it holds to those hearts which are awaiting the renewal it has power to bring. This exercise wisely and steadily followed up will multiply your power by ten.

You can count yourselves always the servants of the Word of God, the active, efficient agents of that unseen form of power. The preachers in the Book of Acts said that it was not fit that they should "leave the ministry of the Word to serve tables." They were waiting upon

that energy and presence which they called "the Word of God," and they could not bear the thought of having their interests diverted even to the practical, useful tasks involved in ministering to physical need.

"The Word of God," as the expression is here used, does not refer to a book nor to any set of printed statements. It indicates a form of living energy passing from God to man. It is quick, powerful, sharp—sharper than a two-edged sword. You are set to serve that. In your study and in your pulpit you are to do the bidding and to coöperate with the purpose of that living energy which is here called "the Word of God."

"Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee, Lord!
My spirit pants for Thee,
O living word."

Here are two musicians! One of them sits down before a great pipe organ to render some noble composition. He reads his score correctly. He has perfect control of his fingers trained to obedience by consistent practice. He puts down the right keys at the right moment and keeps them down just long enough. He moves his feet with perfect accuracy as they touch the keys of the pedal organ. He draws his stops with precision, arranging and employing those particular combinations which are indicated in the work he would render.

The other musician does exactly the same thing. But in addition there is expressed in his playing deep, rich, genuine feeling. He enters profoundly and sympathet-

ically into the mood of the composer whose work he interprets. He utters that high mood by the use of his fingers and his feet through the wide variety of pipes included in that splendid church organ. His playing is such that all aside from the impartation made by the bellows of the organ, the player himself breathes into that instrument the breath of life, and brings us not merely the body of the music but its inmost soul.

You will seek to make the subject matter of your preaching as strong and as well-reasoned as it lies within your power to make it. You will strive steadily to improve and perfect your literary style until the expression of your truth is the best that you can furnish. You will study the methods of delivery until voice and face and hand shall all agree in giving the finest possible interpretation to your thought as you declare it from your pulpit. But behind, and beneath, and above all else, you must strive for that certain mystic element which comes by the divine enduement, bestowing upon your performance the high and permanent quality of spiritual effectiveness.

The world has not heard its best preaching yet. In preaching as in living, because preaching at its best is the interpretation of living and the incentive to nobler and fuller living—in preaching as in living,

> "The best is yet to be
> The last of life for which the first was made."

The better method of Bible study showing us how these great truths were slowly and progressively wrought into the experiences of men of like passions with us, makes

the word of God "living, powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword" in a sense not understood by the men who thought of this literature as having been dictated to "the sacred penmen of the Holy Ghost." The finer and more accurate psychology of these days, bringing out the real content of religious experience, is putting into our hands a blade of Damascus steel with which we are to fight the battles of the Lord. It is giving us in larger and larger measure the choicest and most delicate instruments ever possessed by men for the rare work of Christian nurture. The deeper insight into the real meaning of these social impulses and of the prophetic unrest in the whole organized life of the race, is causing that great word "The Tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them" to shine like the sun in his strength ushering in a veritable day of the Lord. We are witnessing the significant beginnings of what shall become at last "the social incarnation of God." And it is for you, who stand here on the shoulders of all your able and godly predecessors in the work of the Christian ministry, to gather up this richer knowledge and then with minds illumined and wills empowered by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to use it for the renewal of the race in righteousness.

The God we serve is "the living God," the militant, striving, achieving God. The Father worketh even until now and will forever work. The whole wide world of thought, feeling, aspiration, and spiritual achievement is an unfinished universe awaiting His action and ours. The voice of God who is forever making all things new is calling to us at this moment summoning us to join Him in an enterprise infinite and unending.

"Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord." Come now let us build together a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness! Come now let us make men after the likeness and image of the Eternal! This is the word of God which is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. And in this vast work of creative evolution, under the Great Taskmaster's eye and in open alliance with His full strength, the mind, the heart and the will of man in that high exercise known as preaching are to bear an honorable and an indispensable part.